# TWENTY-FOUR WAYS OF HOLDING UP THE SKY

*A Catalogue of the Column-Rooms of the Sanctuary School at the Foot of Mannahatta; in which each yellow column is a guest, a character, and a story of shelter.*

SURJAN

with a Foreword by the Keeper of the Accession Ledger
and the portfolio THE ATLAS OF UPRIGHT THINGS

THE HYPOSTYLE PRESS
Mannahatta · in the Keeping Season

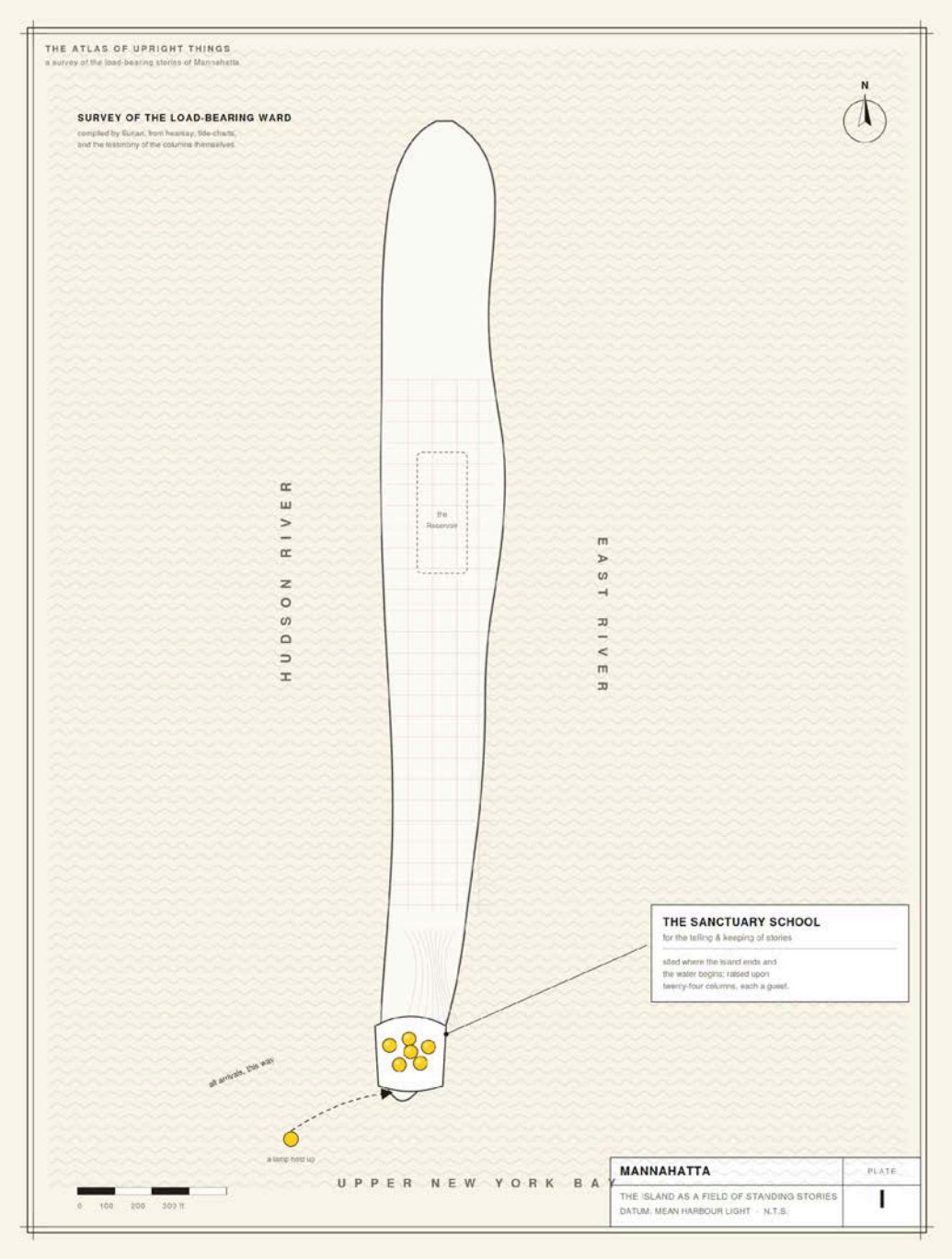
THE ATLAS OF UPRIGHT THINGS
a survey of the load-bearing stories of Mannahatta
SURVEY OF THE LOAD-BEARING WARD
compiled by Gurani, from hearsay, Site-charts,
and the testimony of the columns themselves
N
HUDSON RIVER
the Reservoir
EAST RIVER
THE SANCTUARY SCHOOL
for the telling & keeping of stories
sited where the island ends and
the water begins; raised upon
twenty-four columns, each a guest.
all arrivals, this way
a ramp hold up
UPPER NEW YORK BAY
0 100 200 300 ft
MANNAHATTA
PLATE
THE ISLAND AS A FIELD OF STANDING STORIES
DATUM: MEAN HARBOUR LIGHT · N.T.S.
I

*PLATE I. Mannahatta: the island as a field of standing stories. The Sanctuary School is sited at the southern tip, where the streets give up their grid and run out into water.*

*For everyone who was let land —*

*and for the ones still crossing, tonight, toward a far light they are not yet sure is meant for them.*

*It is. Come. The light is very good.*

*“The column does not interrupt the room. It is the reason the room agreed to exist.”*

— from the Builders’ Catechism, recited at the laying of any first stone

*“A city is a list of the people it refused to turn away. The rest is only weather and real estate.”*

— Surjan, in conversation, overheard and written down by a child

*“Hold this up,” said the sky. And the island, who had been so many things, said: I have done harder.”*

— a saying of the harbour, origin unknown

# Contents

Foreword 6

Introduction 9

Dramatis Columnae 12

How to Walk the Hall 13

Prologue: The Teller Enters the Hall 15

*Columns & Arrival* 17

I. Anevay 17

II. Maïsha 18

III. Pomander 19

IV. Tacit 20

*Columns & Memory* 23

V. Vesper 23

VI. Mnemo 24

VII. Saudade 25

VIII. Halcyon 26

*Columns & the Name* 30

IX. Bashert 30

X. Querida 31

XI. Wepwawet 32

XII. Solace 33

*Columns & Shelter* 37

XIII. Ferdinand 37

XIV. Nokomis 38

XV. Tindra 39

XVI. Eulogia 40

*Columns & the Tide* 44

XVII. Refugio 44

XVIII. Ashreï 45

XIX. Sōlas 46

XX. Marigold 48

*Columns & the Future* 51

XXI. Quietude 51

XXII. Beacon 52

XXIII. Liesel 53

XXIV. Threshold 54

A Note on the Columns Not Catalogued 59

Afterword 61

Catalogue of Architectural Plates & Map 64

A Cartographic Note 80

Provenance & Acknowledgements 82

FRONT MATTER

# Foreword

*by the Keeper of the Accession Ledger*

Every catalogue is a confession that the world is larger than the shelf. I have kept the Ledger of this School for thirty-one years, and I can tell you that the hardest thing to accession is not a book, nor a painting, nor even a child, who at least arrives with a name pinned to the coat. The hardest thing to accession is a column. A column will not lie flat. It refuses the drawer. It declines to be reduced to a card with a number, because a column, properly considered, is not an object in the room but an argument the room is having with the sky — and you cannot file an argument.

Yet here is the catalogue, and here am I, writing its first page against my better judgement and with my whole glad heart. The volume you are holding describes twenty-four columns. They stand — they are standing now, while you read this, in a long bright hall at the southern foot of the island of Mannahatta, where the streets give up their grid and run out into water. The columns are yellow. I want to be precise about the yellow, because visitors always ask, and because the painter Surjan, who is the author of these pages, would never forgive me a vague yellow. It is the yellow of the inside of an egg held up to a window. It is the yellow that the word *morning* would be if the word *morning* were a colour. It is, the children say, the colour of being glad on purpose.

I should explain what the School is, since the catalogue assumes you already know, the way a host assumes you have found the door. The Sanctuary School is not a school in the sense the word has worn smooth. No one is examined here. No one fails. It is a school in the older, kinder sense — a place of leisure, a *schole*, a withdrawing-from-the-hour in order to be taught. What is taught is the island. Specifically, the children are taught that the island has always been a place that people came *to*, fleeing something, carrying something, and that the proof of this is structural: the building they are standing in cannot stand up without the stories. The columns hold the roof. The stories hold the columns. Remove a single tale and the Keeper would have to ask everyone, politely, to step outside while the slab came down.

This is not a metaphor, or rather it is a metaphor that has been built, which is the only kind a builder respects. Each of the twenty-four columns is hollow. You may enter it the way you enter a confidence. Within, the wall curves up and away into a private weather of perforations — pinpricks that the noon sun finds and pours through, so that to stand inside a column at midday is to stand inside a small deliberate galaxy. A stair the colour of the column spirals up like a sentence that has decided to become a staircase. There are shelves, and the shelves hold the cargo: the

things the guest of that column carried across the water, or carried up out of the ground, or carried in the mouth because the hands were full. And there is a pod, a soft yellow seat shaped like a comma, for the listener who arrives early and wishes to wait inside the story before the story begins.

Surjan calls the columns *guests*. This was at first a difficulty for me, professionally, since a guest cannot be accessioned either; a guest is the one entity in a building that the building serves rather than owns. But I have come to see the wisdom. Each column carries the name and the manner of a person — or a people, or a season, or in two cases a particular kind of silence — that once found shelter on this island. The column named Anevay is the first to take the morning. The column named Threshold is hollow all the way through, so that it is less a column than a door that decided to bear weight. Between them stand twenty-two others, and the catalogue that follows is, simply, the guest list of the sky: an accounting of everything that has been asked to hold something up, and said yes.

I am a Keeper, and Keepers are suspicious of joy, the way a quartermaster is suspicious of a soldier who is too cheerful before a march. Joy is expensive and it does not appear on the inventory. But I have watched these columns through thirty-one Septembers, and I will set down here, in the foreword where no one reads carefully, a thing I would not say aloud at the lectern: the joy is load-bearing. I have done the survey. I have laid the theodolite against the morning and measured the angle of the light coming off the yellow, and I tell you that on the days the hall is full of children the slab sits a little higher on its columns than on the days it is empty. The instruments insist. The gladness takes some of the weight.

A word about the author, since you will spend a book in their company. Surjan is a painter who became an architect by refusing to choose, and a storyteller who became both by the same refusal. They are, in the old grammar that the island taught itself slowly and is still learning, neither *he* nor *she* but a third upright thing, a person who stands like a column stands — bearing weight in two directions at once and calling it balance. I mention this not as a curiosity but as a key, because you cannot read this catalogue rightly if you think its central proposition is about buildings. Its central proposition is that a sanctuary is any structure, of stone or of grammar or of the human face, that has decided to make room. Surjan has spent a life making room. The School is only the largest room they have made so far.

Of the method of the catalogue I will say little, since Surjan explains it in the Introduction with more charm than I can muster and fewer apologies. The columns are arranged in six suites of four, each suite gathered under a heading — Arrival, Memory, the Name, Shelter, the Tide, the Future — and between the suites you will find short passages set in a slanted hand. These are the Interludes. They record the questions the children asked while we walked, and the answers Surjan gave, and they are the truest part of the book, because a child will not let a beautiful sentence stand

if it is also a false one. I have left them exactly as they were spoken. Where a child interrupts the Keeper's dignity, the dignity must yield. That is the house rule.

Finally: a confession appropriate to a foreword, which is itself a confession that the book needed defending before it began. I did not want to like this catalogue. I am a man of the drawer and the card and the number, and Surjan's columns are a standing reproach to everything I have filed. But I have come to believe that the drawer is only the place we keep things until we are brave enough to let them stand up. This book lets them stand up. Twenty-four of them. Each holding a corner of a sky that would otherwise have nothing to lean on. Walk in. Mind the light; it is stronger than it looks. And do not be alarmed if, somewhere around the column named Querida or the column named Beacon, you feel the curious sensation of being, yourself, slightly load-bearing. You are. That is what the catalogue is for.

I have one more thing to confess, and a foreword is the place for it, being the page a Keeper writes when the cataloguing is done and the drawers are shut and there is nothing left to do but admit what the work has done to him. Thirty-one years ago I came to this hall to *measure* it — to reduce its joy to figures, its columns to loads, its children to a maximum permitted occupancy. I have failed completely. The figures are all here, correct to the millimetre, and they have taught me nothing the children did not teach me faster and with more laughter. The instruments measure the weight on each column; they cannot measure why the columns agree to bear it. The theodolite finds the angle of the light; it has no setting for what the light is *for*. I have spent a career proving that a thing can be entirely accounted for and remain entirely mysterious, and I have come, in my last years here, to regard that as the most important finding of my life. Catalogue everything. Account for it all. And then stand in the doubled light with a child's cool hand on the yellow and admit that the sum of the accounting is smaller than the thing accounted for, and be — the word I am professionally forbidden and personally unable to avoid — glad.

*— B. Ferromonte*
*Keeper of the Accession Ledger, the Sanctuary School*
*written in the hall, at the hour the columns are most yellow*

FRONT MATTER

# Introduction

*by Surjan*

I want to begin with the floor, because everyone begins with the columns and the columns are tired of it. The floor of the hall is poured, and polished, and pale as the inside of a shell, and it does a thing that took me years to design and a single afternoon to understand: it gives the light back. When the morning comes in off the harbour through the tall glass and strikes the yellow of the columns, the floor receives that yellow and returns it, doubled, upward, so that the columns are lit from below as well as above and seem, for an hour, to be glowing of their own accord, as if gladness were a substance they were leaking. I built a floor that flatters the columns. This is the whole of my architecture and the whole of my ethics. Make a place that gives the light back. Everything else is detailing.

You have been told, by the Keeper, who is a dear and dour man, what the School is. Let me tell you instead what it is *for*, because a building, like a person, is not explained by its blueprints but by its longings. The School is for teaching children that they live on a kept promise. The island under their pink shoes is not, whatever the maps insist, primarily a financial instrument. It is, and has been since before the word *island* arrived in any of the languages now spoken here, a place of *coming-to*. People have come to this narrow rock fleeing fire and fleeing famine and fleeing fathers and fleeing the particular fire that is other people's certainty about who you are allowed to be. They came across water, every one of them, because there is no coming to an island except across water, and water is the oldest teacher of the truth that you cannot bring everything; you must choose what to carry; the rest goes to the bottom and becomes the floor of the sea, which is also, if you think about it, a kind of polished pale surface that gives a certain light back.

I am a painter. I say this so you will forgive my colours and distrust my facts. When I came to design the School, the commission was for a building, and I gave them a building, with all the things a building must have — egress and structure and a roof that holds the rain at a respectful distance. But I could not stop thinking about the verb *to harbour*. We say a harbour is a place ships come to. But we also say a person harbours a thought, harbours a hope, harbours a fugitive. The same word. To make a safe water and to keep a secret kindness: the language had already decided these were one act. So I designed a building that harbours in both senses. It sits at the lip of the actual harbour, where the ships once came. And it harbours, in its hollow columns, the thoughts and the hopes and the fugitives — the stories of everyone the island ever kept.

Here is the structural conceit, which the engineers hated and then loved, the way one comes to love a difficult truth. I refused to let the columns be merely structural. A column that only holds up a roof is a servant, and I will not build servants. So I made them hollow, and I put the stories inside, and I declared — on the drawings, in a note the building inspector circled in red and then, weeks later, uncircled — that the columns are held up by what is kept within them. This is true in the way that matters. A column with nothing inside it is just a tube of expensive material waiting to be justified. A column with a story inside it is a *reason*. The roof does not rest on the concrete. The roof rests on the fact that someone, once, was not turned away.

I arranged the columns as a catalogue because I love catalogues the way some people love the sea — for their honesty about being unfinished. A catalogue never claims to be the world. It claims only to be a list of what was, on a particular afternoon, in a particular collection, able to be counted. The great cataloguer of cities, whose book I read until the spine gave out, understood that to describe fifty-five cities is to confess there are fifty-five thousand you have not described, and that the confession is the gift. So I give you twenty-four columns and I confess to you, gladly, in the first pages, that the island has held up far more than twenty-four kinds of person, that I have left out more guests than I have seated, and that the empty floor between the columns — that pale shining acreage where the children run — is not absence but invitation. The uncatalogued stand there. You may be one of them. The School has, I assure you, a column-shaped space available, hollow and waiting, and the light is very good.

A note on the children, since they are everywhere in these pages and everywhere in the hall, in their white and their pink, turning like slow weather across the floor. I did not put the children in the building as decoration. I put the building around the children as a sentence is put around a verb. They are what the structure is conjugating. When you read the Interludes — the slanted passages where a child stops me mid-flight to ask whether a column can be lonely, or whether the harbour remembers, or why the yellow does not run out — you are reading the load-test of every idea in this book. A story that cannot survive a seven-year-old's plain face was not strong enough to hold up a roof, and I have cut it. What remains has passed. The children are my building inspectors. They circle things in red. Then, sometimes, they uncircle them.

I should say a word about myself, because the Keeper has said one and his was kind but had the shape of a label, and labels, however gentle, are small drawers, and I have spent my life climbing out of small drawers. I am neither the one thing nor the other. I have been called a great many nouns and I have come to think of myself as a verb — as *harbouring*, in the active voice, ongoing, present tense. I tell you this not to instruct you in my pronouns, though the island is slowly learning them and I am proud of my slow island, but because it is the secret engine of the whole design. I built a sanctuary because I needed one, and because in needing one I understood the

island as a fellow-needer, a place that had itself been a refuge so many times that refuge had become its deepest nature, deeper than commerce, deeper than the grid. The island and I are the same kind of upright thing. We bear weight in two directions and call it balance. We make room because room was once made for us, narrowly, and at the last possible moment, by someone who could have said no and said, instead, *yes, there is space, come, the light is very good.*

And so to the radical proposition, which I will state plainly here in the introduction so that it cannot be said I hid it in the architecture. The proposition is *joy*. Not happiness, which is weather, but joy, which is structure. I believe — I have built my belief, you may walk through it — that joy is the correct response to having been kept. That the proper thing to do upon discovering you were not turned away is to become, yourself, a place that does not turn others away, and to do so *gladly*, conspicuously, in a colour visible from the harbour. The columns are yellow because I will not whisper this. I will not build a tasteful grey sanctuary that apologizes for its own mercy. I have built mercy the colour of the inside of an egg held up to a window, twenty-four storeys of it, glowing from a floor that gives the light back, and I have filled it with children who are learning that they live on a kept promise and that the keeping is now, partly, theirs.

Read the catalogue however you like. Read it in order, suite by suite, and you will walk the hall the way the children walk it, from Arrival in the bright south corner to the Future where the glass looks out on the park and the towers and the unhurried trees. Or open it at random, the way you would push open the nearest column and step into whichever story was waiting, which is also a true way to learn an island. The columns do not mind the order. They have all agreed to hold up the same sky. That is the only agreement a sanctuary requires: not that the guests be alike, only that they each take a corner of the weight, and stand, and let the light come up off the floor and find them, and be — there is no other word and I have stopped looking for one — glad.

*— S.*
*the hall, a morning in the keeping season*

FRONT MATTER

# Dramatis Columnae

The twenty-four guests of the hall, in the order the morning reaches them. A column, the painter insists, is a character before it is a support; what it holds up is merely its occupation, while what it holds within is its life. The reader who wishes to be introduced before the telling begins may consult the typology that follows — a survey of profiles, each as distinct as a face — and may return to it whenever a column's manner is forgotten, as one returns to the front of a long novel to recall who married whom.

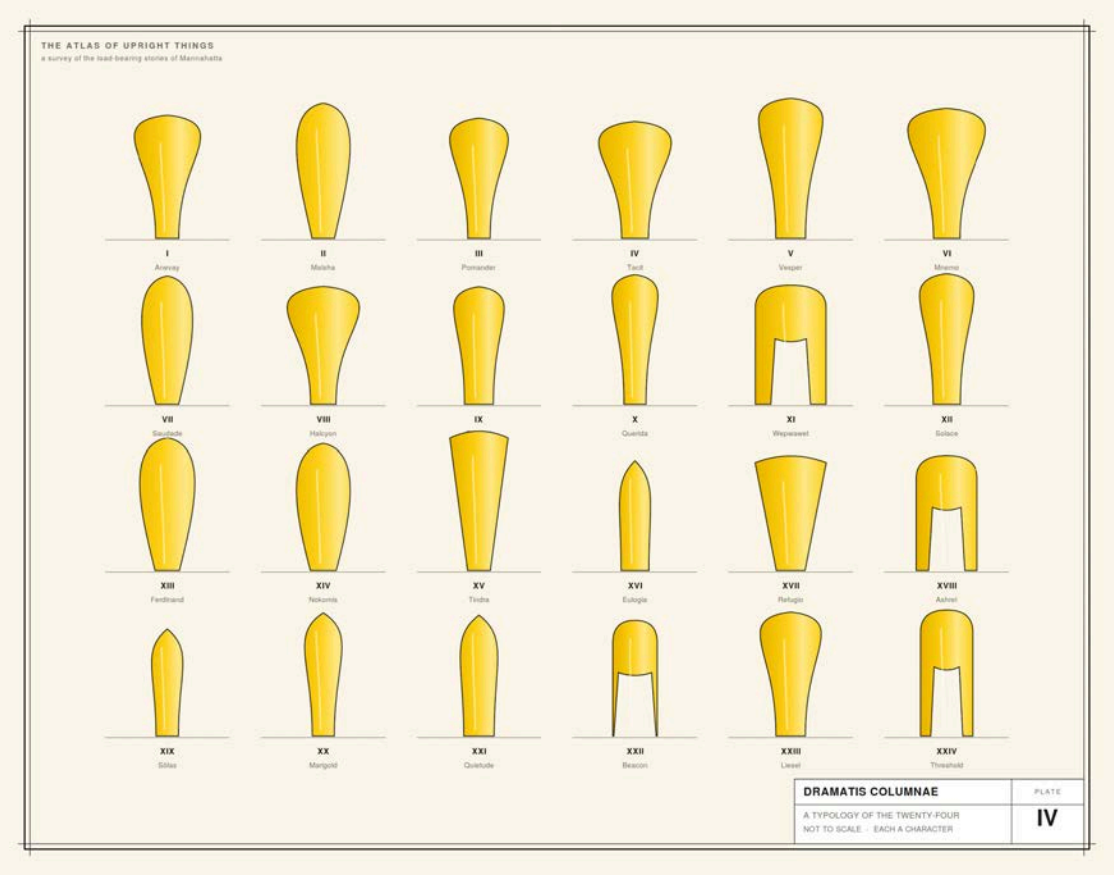


*PLATE IV. Dramatis Columnae — a typology of the twenty-four, each a character, not to scale.*

They are, in their suites: in Arrival, the columns Anevay, Maïsha, Pomander, and Tacit; in Memory, Vesper, Mnemo, Saudade, and Halcyon; in the Name, Bashert, Querida, Wepwawet, and Solace; in Shelter, Ferdinand, Nokomis, Tindra, and Eulogia; in the Tide, Refugio, Ashreï, Sōlas, and Marigold; and in the Future, Quietude, Beacon, Liesel, and Threshold. The morning, who is no respecter of catalogues, visits them in roughly this order and then begins again.

FRONT MATTER

# How to Walk the Hall

*a few instructions from Surjan, easily ignored*

There is a right way to walk the hall, and it is the way the morning walks it, which is to say slowly, sunwise, and without a destination. The visitor who comes to the Sanctuary School the way one comes to a museum — to *see* it, to tick it off, to consume its columns in a brisk educational circuit and depart improved — will get from it precisely nothing, will find it a pleasant yellow room with some odd hollow pillars, and will leave wondering what the fuss was about. The hall does not yield to the brisk. It yields, like every true sanctuary, only to the unhurried, and so the first instruction, the one that contains all the others, is this: *do not be in a hurry*. You did not, presumably, cross a cold ocean to get here. The least you can do, having arrived so easily, is to slow down to the pace of those who did not.

Begin at Anevay, where the morning begins, in the bright south corner, and let the building teach you its only rhythm: stop, enter, attend, ask, move on. At each column, *stop* — fully, with your feet still and your weight settled, the way a column stops, bearing its load without fidgeting. Then *enter*, for a column you have not gone inside is a column you have only met at a party, all surface and no confidence; the story is within, in the hollow, where the perforated light comes alive over your head. Then *attend* — to the cargo on the shelves, the chosen-name cards, the kept lamps, the moulded hands, whatever that particular guest has carried across whatever water — and attend, too, to what the column does to the light and the sound and the temperature of your own held breath. Then *ask*. The columns are listeners first; they are built to receive a question; and the visitor who passes through the whole hall without once asking it anything has treated a conversation as a lecture and will have learned, accordingly, only what they already knew.

You may, if you prefer, walk the hall the other way — not in order, but at random, pushing open whichever column stands nearest and stepping into whichever story is waiting. This is also a true way, perhaps the truer, for it is how arrival actually works: no one crosses the water to a curated sequence; they wash up where the tide leaves them, in whatever neighbourhood has a room, beside whatever neighbour happens to be home, and they make sense of the whole island afterward, backward, out of the accident of where they first stood. To walk the hall at random is to honour the randomness of every arrival, and the children, left to themselves, always walk it this way, careening from Marigold to Tacit to Beacon with no logic but delight, and getting, I suspect, more of the building than the orderly adult who insists on starting at the start. The catalogue is numbered for the convenience of the timid. The brave may scatter.

However you walk it, end at Threshold — this is the one instruction I will not soften — and stand inside the open column and look out through it at the harbour and the open water and the far line where the next ships are always coming, and feel the wind move through, and let the building say to you the thing it has been building toward all along: that you are not finished, that the sanctuary is not finished, that a quarter of the sky is still yours to hold, and that the only way out of the hall, as out of the column called Wepwawet, is *together* — turning to hold the door for whoever is behind you, carrying out what you were given, becoming, in your own life, the held door you came through. Then leave. Walk back out across the floor that gives the light back, into the loud bright unhurried-for-once city, and begin the long glad work of building, out there, with whatever you have, the real columns, of which these yellow ones are only the rehearsal.

THE CATALOGUE OF COLUMN-ROOMS

# Prologue: The Teller Enters the Hall

We come in out of the harbour wind, the children and I, and the hall takes us the way a held breath takes a swimmer — all at once, and warmer than expected. There are forty of them this morning, give or take a runner, in their good clothes, the pink and the white, because a visit to the columns is an occasion and their grandmothers know it even when the children do not. They stop just inside the glass. They always stop. It is not the size of the place that stops them, though it is large; it is the *light*. The columns are already glowing — that doubled light, down from the perforations and up from the floor — and a child who has never seen it will stand quite still for a moment and then, without being told, lower their voice. Wonder does this. It is the only authority I trust.

"Are they hot?" asks a small one near my knee, meaning the columns, meaning the yellow, which does look, I admit, as though it might be warm to the touch like a stove or a sleeping animal. I tell her to go and see. She lays her palm flat against the nearest shaft — it is the column called Anevay, the first to take the morning — and her face does the thing I built the whole building to make faces do. "It's cool," she reports, betrayed and delighted. "It's cool like a window." Yes. The yellow is the warmth of morning and the temperature of glass, and the contradiction is the first lesson, though I never say so. A sanctuary feels warm and keeps a cool head. That is how it survives long enough to be warm to anyone.

I should tell you how the telling goes, since you are coming with us. We walk the hall in a slow spiral, sunwise, the way the morning itself moves through the columns, and at each column we stop, and I open it — they are not locked; the latch is only a story you have to know to find — and the children go in, as many as will fit, and the rest crowd the doorway, and inside the small galaxy of perforations comes alive over our heads, and I tell them whose column this is. Whose guest. What that guest carried across the water, or up out of the ground, and how the island made room. And then the children ask me something I did not expect, and the column writes it down — for the columns are listeners first and supports only second — and we move on, leaving the question standing there to hold up its corner of the roof.

One more thing before we begin, since you are new and the children are not, and I would not have you lost among them. You will notice, as we walk, that I speak of the columns as though they could hear — that I say a column *keeps* a story, *listens* to a question, *agrees* to bear its load. I am aware this is a way of speaking. I am a builder; I know what concrete is and is not. But I have learned, in thirty years of telling, that the way of speaking is also a way of *seeing*, and that a child who is taught to regard a column as a guest rather than a girder will grow up to regard a stranger as a guest rather than a threat, and that this transfer — from the way we speak of buildings to

the way we treat people — is not decoration but the entire curriculum, smuggled in past the child's defences inside a story about a yellow pillar. So when I tell you that Anevay takes the morning gently so that the others may have it second-hand and softened, believe me a little, even knowing better. The believing is the lesson. The lesson is the load. And the load, believe me or not, is somehow, measurably, borne.

There are twenty-four. We will not reach them all before the grandmothers come, and that is correct; you are not meant to finish a sanctuary in a morning. But we will reach enough. Come. Mind the floor — it is brighter than it looks, and a child has been known to chase their own reflection clear across the hall believing it a second, shyer child who lives down in the shine. Take my hand if you like. I am the Teller. I am neither the one thing nor the other, which makes me an excellent guide to a building that is also neither, being both a structure and a sentence, both a harbour and the act of harbouring. Here is the first column. It was here, the island says, before the rest of us learned to stand. Its name is Anevay, and it takes the morning so that the others may have it gently, second-hand, already softened. Put your hand on it. Feel how it keeps a cool head. Now. Listen.

SUITE THE FIRST

# Columns & Arrival

*In which we consider the columns that hold the morning, and the guests who came across water to a narrow rock that had been waiting, without knowing it was waiting, to make room.*

## I. Anevay

**B**efore the others, Anevay. The name is older than the building and was lent to the column by the ground, which had it first. You must understand that the island did not begin as real estate; it began as *many hills*, that is what its oldest name says, an island of many hills, and water on every side, and a people who did not arrive here because they were already the place's own answer to the question the place was asking. Anevay holds that. Anevay is the column of the before — before the grid drew its straight lines over the curved land, before the word *property* came across the water in a Dutch mouth, before any of the arrivals that the other twenty-three columns commemorate. Anevay commemorates the ground that did the receiving.

Inside Anevay there are no shelves. This shocks the children, who have learned to expect cargo. But the guest of this column carried nothing across any water, because the guest of this column is the water's far shore itself, the land, which carries everything and is therefore not seen to carry. In place of shelves there is a single low bench of the same poured pale stone as the floor, and on it nothing, and the nothing is the point. Sit, I tell the children, and they sit, and the perforations come on overhead, and I say: this is the oldest sanctuary. Not the building. The ground the building stands on. Everyone who ever came to this island was made welcome first by this — by the simple structural fact that there was somewhere to stand.

The hills are gone now, mostly, shaved flat to make the streets agreeable to carts, but Anevay remembers their shape the way your tongue remembers a tooth that has been pulled. When the morning comes off the harbour it strikes Anevay first, being the southmost and the oldest, and for a moment — I have measured it, the Keeper laughed at me but I have measured it — the column throws a shadow in the shape of a hill that no longer exists, a soft mounded shadow utterly unlike the column that casts it, as if the light, passing through the memory inside, were bent toward the original form of the land. The children chase the hill-shadow. They cannot catch it; it is made of subtraction. But they learn its name, and a hill that is chased by children is not entirely gone.

"What did the ground get," a child once asked me, "for holding everybody up?" It is the right question and I gave the only honest answer. Mostly it got forgotten, I said. Mostly the arrivals stood on it and looked up at the sky they meant to make something of and did not look down at what was making the standing possible. That is the usual fate of the load-bearing. But not here. Here we built a column the colour

of morning and gave it the first light and no cargo at all, only a bench, so that the first thing a child learns in this hall is to thank the ground. Anevay is how the building says *I know what I am standing on*. Every sanctuary should know what it is standing on. The ones that forget become, in time, the very thing their guests once fled.

## II. Maïsha

Not every arrival is a choice, and Maïsha is the column that refuses to pretend otherwise. Her name means *life*, in a language carried here in the hold of ships by people who were cargo — who did not cross the water as guests but as goods, in the obscene grammar of that traffic, and who performed across the generations the most stubborn and luminous act in the island's whole history: they took an arrival meant to erase them, and they made *life* of it. They became the city's music and its mathematics and its mercy. Maïsha holds this, and Maïsha is, by the Keeper's survey, the strongest column in the hall. The slab leans on her hardest. She does not seem to notice the weight. People who have carried what cannot be carried develop a particular relationship to load.

Her shelves are not behind glass. I made that decision early and defended it against curators who wanted to protect the cargo. The cargo of Maïsha must be touchable, because it was made by hands for hands: a fiddle, a folded apron, a child's first reader with the spine taped, a tin of buttons each of which was once the only round bright thing in a pocket. There was, on this island, a village — Seneca, they called it, up where the great park now lies — a place that free people built for themselves, with churches and gardens and a school, a sanctuary made by the very people the wider city kept trying not to make room for. The city took it back to make a lawn. Maïsha keeps the village. Not as a grievance — though the grievance is just and I will not sand it smooth — but as a proof: that the kept can become keepers, that people given no room will build room, will plant gardens on the rock, will raise a school where none was offered them. The first Sanctuary School on this island was not mine. It was theirs, and it was taken, and Maïsha stands so that it is not also forgotten.

The children love Maïsha because she sings. This is not poetry; it is acoustics, though the two are cousins. The hollow of the column is tuned — I tuned it, with a man who builds the insides of cellos — so that a voice raised inside it comes back fuller, warmer, joined by its own overtones, so that one child singing in Maïsha sounds like three, like a small choir of their possible selves. They go in alone and come out having heard themselves multiplied. *That*, I tell them, is what this island did with the life it was given by the people it most wronged: it heard them, and the hearing came back multiplied, and the city has been singing in borrowed overtones ever since and mostly forgetting whose voice it borrowed. Maïsha remembers. Sing in her once and you will never again believe you sing alone.

I will tell you the turn, the thing that makes Maïsha not a monument but a guest. A monument asks for silence and a bowed head. Maïsha asks for *life* — that is her whole name and her whole instruction. She does not want to be mourned in. She wants to be sung in, danced near, made glad against. The deepest respect you can pay to those who turned an arrival of horror into a city of music is to be, in their column, unmistakably and defiantly alive. The children know this without my telling. They never whisper in Maïsha. They sing. And the slab, leaning its great weight on her, is held up not by concrete but by the refusal of the cargoed to be only cargo — held up, that is, by *life*, which is the strongest material I have ever built with and the only one I would trust with a sky.

## III. Pomander

Now the column of the carried scent. A pomander is a little pierced sphere of fragrance that travellers once carried against the bad air of strange places, a portable atmosphere, a way of bringing the smell of home into the nose so that the nose, at least, need not emigrate. Pomander the column is pierced all over with the most perforations of any in the hall — she is more hole than wall, the Keeper frets about it — and through the piercings comes not only light but, on certain mornings when the ventilation is set just so, *scent*: cardamom, orange peel, the green sharpness of crushed herb stems, the particular dust of dried roses. I will not tell you how it is done. A magician who explains the trick has merely a trick; one who keeps the secret has a sanctuary.

The guests of Pomander are everyone who arrived carrying a smell. They are legion. Up the narrow streets to the east of here, where the tenements once stood shoulder to shoulder like books too tightly shelved, the arrivals from a hundred elsewheres unpacked their bundles, and the first thing out of every bundle, before the documents, before the daguerreotype of the grandmother, was the *food* — the seed saved in a hem, the starter for the bread kept alive against all customs inspection, the spice that cost a week's wage and weighed nothing and meant everything. They could not carry the house. They could not carry the hill or the river or the particular slant of light through the particular tree. But they could carry the smell of the kitchen, and so they did, and they cooked it here, and the smell of the kitchen, rising from ten thousand windows, became the actual air of the island, until now you cannot take a breath in this city that is not a refugee's recipe.

I built Pomander to teach the children that arrival is olfactory before it is anything else, that you know you have made a place home when it begins to smell like your grandmother's hands. Inside the column the shelves hold not books but jars, and the jars hold not specimens but *gifts* — for any child may add to Pomander, may bring a pinch of whatever their own kitchen smells of, and seal it in a jar with their name, and shelve it among the others. The column grows more fragrant every year. It is the only exhibit in the hall that is also a pantry, the only guest who is fed by the visitors

rather than feeding them, and this reversal is deliberate. We are taught that the arrival must be grateful to the place. Pomander teaches the place to be grateful for the arrival — for the spice it could not have grown, the recipe it could not have invented, the smell it did not know it was missing until a stranger, newly landed and homesick, opened a bundle and made the whole island hungry.

A child asked me once whether the smell would ever run out. A good fear; everything portable seems like it must run out. No, I told her. This is the strange economics of the carried scent: it multiplies in the sharing. The grandmother who taught you the recipe did not have less of it for teaching you; she had a granddaughter who could cook. The island is not diminished by the thousand kitchens it absorbed; it is the richest-smelling rock on the earth. Pomander will not run out because fragrance, unlike gold, increases when spent. Spend it, I tell them. Add your jar. Make the column too fragrant for its own shelves. There is no such thing, in a true sanctuary, as too welcome.

## IV. Tacit

And the column of the unspoken. Tacit is the quietest guest in the hall and the hardest to catalogue, because Tacit's story is told without words, and a catalogue is made of nothing else. The guests of this column are all the arrivals who came without the language — who stood at the desk of the official and could not say their own need, who learned the new tongue slowly and painfully or never, who lived whole lives here in a silence the loud city mistook for emptiness. The city is always mistaking silence for emptiness. It is the city's most expensive error. Tacit corrects it, wordlessly, which is the only way the correction would be true.

Inside Tacit there are no inscriptions, no labels, no shelves of named cargo. There is, instead, a wall you may touch, moulded all over in low relief with the shapes of hands — hands making the signs that hands make when mouths cannot: the hand laid flat on the heart, the two hands opening like a book, the fingers that mean *home*, the fingers that mean *help*, the fingers that mean *thank you*, the fingers that mean *I am still here*. The deaf came to this island and made of it a place where the eye could hear; the speechless-with-fear came and learned that a meal offered needs no grammar; the ones whose language no one here had ever met came and discovered that *welcome* has a face and the face is universal and the face was, against all their terror, turned toward them. Tacit keeps the vocabulary of the wordless welcome. The children learn three signs in this column. They never forget them. You cannot forget a word you keep in your hands.

There is a Quaker silence in Tacit too, the held quiet of the meeting where the sanctuary was the stillness itself, where people who would not swear oaths and would not bear arms and would not turn away the hunted sat together in a silence so full it had to be called worship. They harboured the fleeing in that silence, on this island and up its river, said nothing that could be testified to, and by saying nothing said the

largest thing: *we will not give you up*. Some sanctuaries are loud and yellow, like mine. Some are silent and grey and sit very still and do not even tell you they are saving your life. Tacit honours the second kind, which is the harder kind, and the kind less likely to get a column, except that I gave it one, the slimmest and the stillest, so that the loud bright hall would have at its heart a held breath, a deliberate quiet, a guest who proves that you can make enormous room and never raise your voice.

"How do we know what Tacit is saying," a careful child asked me, "if it doesn't use words?" I knelt down to her level, which is the correct level for the truest answers. We don't always know, I said. That is the lesson of Tacit and it is a hard one even for grown people. Sometimes someone arrives with a need they cannot say and we cannot understand, and the temptation is to decide that because we cannot understand it, it is not real. Tacit is here so that we never decide that. When you cannot understand the language of a need, I told her, you do not get to call the need empty. You get to make room anyway, on faith, the way you would leave a light on for a guest whose face you have not yet seen. She thought about this. Then she went and laid her small hand against the moulded wall, fitting her fingers into the shape that means *I am still here*, and she held it there a long time, saying nothing, which was, I think, exactly right.

## *Interlude: At the Turning of the First Suite*

*A child who had been quiet through all of Arrival took my sleeve as we left Tacit and asked, in the tone children use for the questions they have been saving: "Are the columns sad?"*

*I said: Why do you ask?*

*She said: "Because the stories are sad. The ground got forgotten. The village got taken. The people came in chains. The quiet people couldn't even say what they needed. I thought this was a happy place. The yellow looks happy."*

*I sat down on the floor, which surprised her, grown people not generally sitting on floors, and she sat too, and the other children gathered the way iron filings gather, and I told them the thing I most want them to carry out of this hall. The stories are sad in their middles, I said, almost all of them, because the middle of every sanctuary story is the thing the guest was fleeing, and the things people flee are terrible, and I will not lie to you about that, because you are the building inspectors and you circle lies in red. But look where the stories are* kept. *They are kept inside columns the colour of morning, in a hall full of light that comes up off the floor, in a building that cannot stand without them. The sadness is the middle. The* keeping *is the end. And the keeping is glad.*

*The quiet child considered this. Then she said: "So the yellow isn't pretending." No, I said. The yellow is not pretending. The yellow is what it looks like when sad things are finally, completely safe. She nodded, satisfied in the deep way children are satisfied when an adult has told them the truth and trusted them to hold it. Then she ran off to chase her reflection across the floor, glad and load-bearing, and we went on to the columns of Memory.*

SUITE THE SECOND

# Columns & Memory

*In which we consider the columns that hold what was left behind, for an arrival is also a departure seen from the other shore, and the guest who comes carrying a country must put it somewhere, and these are the columns where it is kept.*

## V. Vesper

Vesper is the evening column, though the hall has no evening — it shuts before the light goes — and this is the first of Vesper's gentle paradoxes. Her name is the evening star and the evening prayer at once, the hour when the day's arrivals pause and the heart turns, unbidden, toward what is no longer near: the village left, the dead unburied because there was no time, the door of a house that is now another family's door or no door at all, only a field. Every arrival carries an evening inside it, a permanent dusk over the abandoned place, and Vesper is where the children learn that this dusk is not a wound to be healed but a room to be visited, kept lit, and left again.

Inside Vesper, the perforations are arranged not at random, as in the other columns, but in the actual constellations — the night sky as it stands over this latitude — so that to enter Vesper at noon is to stand under the stars of the island's own evening, pricked in light through the yellow. But here is Vesper's deeper craft: the constellations slowly turn, over the course of the day, by a mechanism the children are never shown, so that the guest who lingers sees the sky wheel as it wheels at night, and understands, bodily, that the same stars that stand over this island stand also over the abandoned village, the left country, the far field — that the sky is the one possession no emigrant has ever had to leave behind, the one address that did not change. The homesick on this island looked up and saw the stars of home, because the stars are too high to belong to any country. Vesper keeps that consolation. It is the oldest one. It is free, and it works.

The shelves of Vesper hold letters. Not the originals — those are too frail — but faithful copies, in the original hands, of the letters the arrived sent back across the water to the not-yet-arrived: come, or do not come; it is hard here, or it is better than they say; I have found work, I have found nothing, I have found a person, I think of you at evening. Whole lives are in the shelves of Vesper, the entire literature of departure, written by people who would never call themselves writers and who wrote, under the pressure of distance, the most honest prose the island has ever produced. The children cannot read most of the letters — the languages are too many — but they hold them, and they understand the gesture, which needs no translation: someone, far from home and missing it at evening, sat down and tried to keep the connection alive with the only thread available, which was words, sent slowly across

water, arriving weeks late, read by lamplight, kept forever. Memory is a correspondence. Vesper is the post office of the kept.

A child asked whether it was sad to miss a place you could never go back to. I told her about the evening star, which is also the morning star, the same bright planet seen at the two ends of the dark, called by two names because we forget, between dusk and dawn, that the thing that sets is the thing that rises. What you miss at evening, I said, you will find you carry into morning. The village you left is not behind you; it is *inside* you, and everything you build here will have its shape pressed faintly into the foundation, the way a leaf leaves its print in stone. You did not lose the place. You became the place's way of continuing. Vesper is sad the way the evening is sad — briefly, beautifully, and with the morning already, secretly, on its way.

## VI. Mnemo

If Vesper is the post office, Mnemo is the library, and the most heavily laden column in the hall — shelves from floor to vanishing, spiralling up the inner wall with the stair, so that to climb Mnemo is to climb through a paper weather of every book the island's guests carried, wrote, or could not stop reading. Her name is memory itself, the mother of the muses in the old reckoning, the faculty without which there is no art, no grief, and no welcome, for welcome is only memory turned outward: *I remember being a stranger, therefore I make room for the stranger*. The whole moral architecture of the sanctuary rests, structurally, on Mnemo. Forget that you were once a guest and you will become a gate.

The island built, in its better century, a great library — not this one; a vast one, with lions out front and a room like an inverted ship where anyone at all, with no card, no fee, no question asked about where they were born, could come in out of the weather and read. This was, and is, a sanctuary of the purest kind, and the children are always astonished when I tell them it asks nothing. *Nothing?* Nothing. Not your name, not your nation, not your reason. The library is the island's promise made legible: that knowledge is a commons, that the door is open, that the warm room and the free book are a right and not a charity. Mnemo keeps the spirit of that room. The shelves are real books and the children may take one down and read it on the spiralling stair, and no one will ask them anything at all, and this small experience of the unconditional — of being trusted with a book merely for being a child in a building — does more to raise a generous person than any lesson I could devise.

The cargo of Mnemo is reading itself, the most portable home ever devised. A book is a country you can fold and carry through any customs; a story learned by heart cannot be confiscated; the people who came to this island with nothing came, very often, with *everything*, because they had committed their literature to memory in the languages the new place did not yet know it would need. They recited their epics on the tenement stairs. They taught their children the verses on the long

evenings. They translated, slowly, lovingly, badly and then beautifully, until the island's own library swelled with the smuggled masterpieces of a hundred elsewheres, and the city that thought it was giving the immigrants a culture discovered it had been *given* one, immeasurably enriched, by the very arrivals it had condescended to. Mnemo holds the smuggled libraries. She is the proof that the most valuable thing crossing any border is always the one the inspectors cannot see, because it is folded up inside a person, in the place where the memory keeps the songs.

Climb Mnemo to the top — the children race to — and you come out into the bell, the wide flared head of the column where it catches the slab, and here the perforations are densest, a true firmament, and here, fixed to the curved inner ceiling where you must lie on your back to read it, is a single line, the only inscription in the whole hall, which I will not reproduce here because it must be earned by the climb. I will say only that it concerns the relationship between remembering and making room, and that it has made more than one grandmother, lying on her back beside her grandchild at the top of a yellow column, weep in the particular way of someone who has just been told, in seven words, the meaning of their entire difficult life. Memory is not the past. Memory is the future's instructions for being kind. Mnemo holds them at the top, where you must climb to read, because the most important things should cost a little effort and reward it with the whole sky.

## VII. Saudade

There is a word in the language of the sea-faring people who were among the first to cross to this island in numbers — a word that does not survive translation and is therefore the truest thing in this catalogue, since the truest things are exactly those that cannot be carried whole across the water of another tongue. The word is *saudade*, and it names the presence of an absence: the love that remains for what is gone, the sweetness in the missing, the way longing for a thing can become, over years, more precious than the thing itself was. Saudade the column holds this, and Saudade is, I think, the most beautiful of the twenty-four, though the Keeper says beauty is not a category one may accession and I say that is exactly why I built a whole column to it.

The first of these arrivals came a very long time ago, fleeing a fire of certainty in their old country — the certainty that there was only one permitted way to pray, and that they, praying otherwise, must convert or burn or run. They ran. Across an ocean, then another, from a refuge that turned them out to a refuge that turned them out, until a handful of them — the number is small enough to hold in the mind, a couple of dozen souls, weary past speech — arrived at this island, then a rough Dutch trading post, and asked to stay. They were nearly refused. The man in charge wished to refuse them. And then — this is the hinge on which Saudade turns, and the children always go quiet here — he was overruled, from across the water, by his own

masters, who told him, in effect: *let them stay; they have nowhere else; that is reason enough.* And they stayed. And from that handful of the nearly-refused grew, in time, a community, a congregation, a thread in the island's rope that has never since been cut. The island became a sanctuary at the precise moment someone with the power to refuse was told that *nowhere else to go* is, by itself, sufficient grounds for *yes*.

Saudade keeps that *yes*, and keeps also the longing the *yes* did not cure, for they never saw their old country again, and they missed it, and the missing did not fade but ripened. The shelves of Saudade hold the objects of ripened longing: a key to a house that no longer stands, kept for six generations and handed down with the instruction to keep it; a recipe for a sweet eaten only on a holiday in a town no one living has seen; a single pressed flower whose name is lost but whose grandmother is remembered. These are not sad objects, though the children expect them to be. They are *saudade* objects — proof that what we love does not require our return in order to remain ours, that you can keep a country in a key, a town in a sweetness, a grandmother in a flower, and that the keeping is not a failure to move on but the highest form of moving on: carrying the loved place forward into the new one, so that the new place is built, partly, out of the love left over from the old.

I told the children the secret of saudade, which is the secret of all the columns of Memory and perhaps of the whole hall. The opposite of loss, I said, is not having. The opposite of loss is *love that outlasts the thing it loved*. When you lose a place and go on loving it, you have not lost; you have transmuted. You have turned a country into a feeling, which is lighter to carry and cannot be taken at any border, and which you can then *give away*, endlessly, the way the people of Saudade gave their longing to this island until the island itself learned to feel it — until this loud commercial rock developed, against all expectation, a soul made largely of other people's homesickness, ripened into love, and spent, generously, in the building of a place where the next handful of the nearly-refused might hear someone say, from across whatever water: *let them stay; they have nowhere else; that is reason enough.*

## VIII. Halcyon

We end the suite of Memory with its gentlest guest. Halcyon is named for the legendary bird that nested on the winter sea, and for whose nesting the gods were said to calm the waters — the original *halcyon days*, the brief charmed calm in the heart of the storm season. The guests of this column are all those who came to the island carrying the memory not of horror but of *peace* — the remembered calm from before the war, the before-times that the fled-from place once was, the good years that existed and were real and were destroyed and must, against the propaganda of grief, be *remembered as good* and not retroactively darkened by the catastrophe that followed. Halcyon is the column that protects the happy memory from the unhappy ending. This is harder than it sounds and more important than it seems.

For there is a cruelty grief plays on the mind: it reaches backward and stains the bright days with the dark one, so that the survivor cannot remember the laughter without the loss that came after, and the whole good past is poisoned by its ending. Halcyon refuses this. The shelves hold only the calm: the photograph of the picnic before anyone knew, the song that meant only a wedding and not yet a lament, the toy from a childhood that was, for a while, simply a childhood. The island filled, in its hard centuries, with people who had every reason to remember their old lives as nightmares, and many did. But many also performed the harder, braver act: they kept the halcyon. They told their children, *before all this, we were happy; the orchard was real; the music was real; the long gold afternoons were real; do not let them take the afternoons as well as everything else.* And the children believed them, and the calm was kept, and a person who can keep one true halcyon memory through any storm has a sanctuary no army can burn, because it is made of an afternoon, and afternoons, once truly had, are indestructible.

Inside Halcyon the light is different — softer, golder, for I glazed the perforations of this column with a faint amber, so that the noon entering becomes late-afternoon, the gold of four o'clock in summer, the most peaceful light there is. The children grow calm in Halcyon without knowing why. They lower their voices, slow their hands, sit in the comma-shaped pod and go quiet, bathed in a borrowed four o'clock. I built it as a place to rest in the middle of the telling, a charmed calm in the heart of the long morning, a halcyon hour for the small storm-tossed souls who have just heard eight true stories with sad middles and need, before they hear sixteen more, to remember that calm is also real, also true, also memorable — that the afternoon happened, and can be returned to, and is, in the deepest sense, theirs to keep.

A child asked me, drowsy in the amber light, whether the calm was a memory or a wish. Both, I said, and that is the bird's secret. The halcyon nests on the sea in winter; it makes its calm in the worst season, out of nothing but its own insistence; the calm is real *because* it is insisted upon. Your peaceful memory and your hope for peace are the same bird seen at two moments of its flight. Remember the calm and you make it; make the calm and you will have it to remember. This is not a trick of the mind. It is the mind's one true power, the only thing it can do that the storm cannot undo. Keep your halcyon, I told the drowsy child. Nest on the winter sea. Insist on the afternoon. And she did, right there, falling for a moment into the small bright sleep of the perfectly safe, while the column held up the roof and the gold light held up the child and the whole arrangement held, as it has held for thirty-one Septembers, against the weather of the world outside the glass.

## *Interlude: A Question About the Yellow*

*Between the suites a boy asked the question I wait for every time, the question the whole building is an answer to, though I never answer it the same way twice. He asked: "Why is it yellow? Why not a normal colour?"*

*I asked him what a normal colour would be. He thought hard. "Grey," he said. "Or like, beige. Serious colours. This is the colour of a duck."*

*It is, I admitted, very much the colour of a duck. And of an egg yolk, and of a school bus, and of the middle of a daisy, and of the light at the exact moment the sun clears the harbour. I asked him why he thought serious places were grey.*

*"Because serious things are sad," he said, with the terrible clarity of the young, "and sad is grey."*

*Here, I said, is the most radical thing I will tell you all morning, so lean in. Some people believe that to take suffering seriously you must be grey about it — solemn, hushed, the colour of a rainy Tuesday. They build their memorials grey and their churches dim and they speak of hard things in low voices, and there is a place for that; Tacit is grey at heart and Tacit is holy. But I believe something else, and I built a whole yellow building to believe it out loud. I believe that the most serious response to suffering is* joy *— not the forgetting of the suffering, but the defiant building, on top of it and because of it, of something glad. The people in these columns suffered greyly. The right monument to them is not more grey. It is the brightest thing the eye can bear. It is the colour of the morning they fled toward. Anyone can be solemn about pain. It takes a real spine to be* yellow *about it.*

*The boy looked at the columns for a while. Then he said: "So the yellow is the brave colour." The bravest, I said. Greys are easy. Anyone can match the weather. To be yellow in a grey world — to be glad on purpose, in public, in honour of the people who taught you how — that is the whole curriculum of this school, and you have just passed it. He grinned, enormously, and ran to tell the others he had found out why, and I let him, because he had.*

SUITE THE THIRD

# Columns & the Name

*In which we consider the columns that hold what a person is called, and what they call themselves, for the first gift a sanctuary gives is to ask your name and the second, greater gift is to let you answer.*

## IX. Bashert

**B**ashert is a word from the language of the people who came up these streets in their hundreds of thousands, and it means *meant to be* — destined, fated, the thing that was always going to find you, usually said of a beloved but applicable, the wise ones knew, to any rightness that arrives looking like accident. Bashert the column holds the strange grace of the changed name. For this is what happened to the arrivals, by the boatload, at the desks of the harbour officials: their names, too long or too foreign or too quickly said, were misheard, misspelled, shortened, flattened, sometimes simply replaced, so that a person stepped off the boat as one name and walked into the city as another, renamed by a tired clerk who could not spell the truth of them.

This was a violence, and I will not pretend it was not; to lose your name is to lose the handle by which your ancestors could find you. But Bashert holds the other half of the truth, the half that is harder and brighter. For some — not all, but some, and their stories are the ones this column keeps — the lost name made room for a found one. The clerk's error became, over a life, a destiny: the flattened name grew its own dignity, the children bore it proudly, and looking back from the far end of a good life the renamed would say, *it was bashert* — it was meant — *that I should arrive as one person and become another, for the person I became could only have been born on this side of the water, under this new name, in this new light.* Bashert keeps the names that were lost and the lives that were found, and holds them not as a wound and a consolation but as a single thing: the truth that you are not only your inheritance; you are also your arrival; and sometimes the second name is the one that was, all along, waiting.

The shelves of Bashert are a registry — not of the official names, the ones the clerks wrote, but of the *true* names, the ones the families kept at home, in the old tongue, whispered over the children at night so they would not forget who they also were. For this is the deepest craft of the renamed: they kept both. They answered to the clerk's name in the street and the grandmother's name at the table, and they were not diminished by the doubling but enlarged — two-named, hyphen-souled, fluent in their own translation. The children of this island are, so many of them, people with a public name and a kitchen name, a name for the new country and a name for the old, and Bashert teaches them that this is not confusion but *wealth*: to be called two true

things is to be twice findable, twice loved, a person with a sanctuary in each language.

I knelt with a child in Bashert and she told me, shyly, that she had two names — the one on her school papers and the one her grandmother used, which no one at school could say. Which is the real one, she wanted to know. Both, I told her, and you are bashert, you are meant, in both. The name your grandmother uses is the one that knows where you come from. The name your teacher uses is the one that knows where you are going. A whole person needs both directions. Never let anyone tell you to choose; a sanctuary that makes you choose between your names is no sanctuary at all. She asked me which kind I was, two-named or one. I told her I was a person who had chosen my own name, which is a third kind, and the rarest, and that I would tell her about it at the column called Solace, if she could wait. She could. Children can wait for the truth if you promise it is coming.

## X. Querida

Querida means *dear one*, *beloved*, in the language that came north to this island from the warm islands and the long isthmus and the great southern continent — the language of *querida*, *mija*, *corazón*, the language extravagantly rich in endearments, as if its speakers had decided, against all the evidence of history, that the most important thing one person can do to another is call them *dear*. Querida the column holds the sanctuary that is hidden inside an endearment. For there is a shelter made entirely of how we address each other, a roof built of the good names we call the people we love, and it keeps out a particular weather — the cold of being no one's dear — that has killed more souls than any literal winter.

The guests of Querida came to a city that often could not be bothered to learn their names at all, that called them by their function — the busboy, the seamstress, the man who delivers — or by slurs, or by nothing, looking through them as through clean glass. And in the face of that erasure they built, in their own neighbourhoods, up in the heights and over the river and in the loud bright blocks where the music spilled from the windows, a fierce economy of endearment: they called each other *querida*, *querido*, dear-one and dear-one, lavishly, constantly, the grandmother to the grandchild and the neighbour to the neighbour and the stranger, even, to the stranger, so that a person who was no one all day in the cold city could come home at evening to a block where they were *dear* to everyone, addressed in love a hundred times between the corner and the door. This is a sanctuary. It has no walls and pays no rent and it has saved numberless lives. Querida keeps it.

Inside this column there are no shelves of objects, for the cargo of Querida is words, and words will not sit on shelves. Instead the inner wall is written over, floor to bell, in every endearment the island's many languages have devised — *querida* and *mija* and *habibi* and *bubbeleh* and *mavournín* and *cariño* and *cuore mio* and *light of my eyes* in tongues I cannot transcribe — a whole spiralling litany of the names we

call the dear, climbing with the stair into the firmament, so that a child climbing Querida rises through a galaxy made entirely of affection. The children read the ones they know and ask about the ones they don't, and they learn the most useful vocabulary in any language, the words for *you matter to me*, and they carry them out, and they use them, and the island grows, by a few degrees each year, more fluent in tenderness, which was always the cargo most worth smuggling.

A small fierce child demanded to know why we don't just call everyone dear, if it works so well. A revolutionary question, and correct. We could, I told her. There is nothing stopping us but shyness and the strange shame the cold places teach, that to call a stranger *dear* is to be soft, and that softness is weakness. But Querida's guests knew the opposite: that tenderness is the hardest thing to keep alive in a hard city, and that keeping it alive is therefore the strongest thing a person can do. To call the lonely *dear* when the city calls them nothing — that is not weakness; that is the resistance. So yes, I told her, call everyone dear. Start now. She turned to the nearest child, a boy she had never met, and said, with enormous dignity, *querida*, getting the gender wrong and the spirit exactly right, and the boy, instead of laughing, stood up straighter, sheltered, for a moment, under a roof of two syllables, and that is the whole of what this column has to teach.

## XI. Wepwawet

From the oldest of the lands that sent its scattered children to this island comes the name of this column: Wepwawet, *Opener of the Ways*, the one who walks ahead and opens the road — in the old country a guide of souls, a clearer of paths, depicted as a watchful upright creature with its face toward the horizon and its body braced to push the gate. Wepwawet the column holds the sanctuary that is made by the *already-arrived*: the ones who, having crossed, turn back toward the water and reach out a hand to the ones still crossing. Every sanctuary needs its openers of ways. They are not the guests; they are the ones who hold the door, and the door, held long enough, becomes a column, and the column holds up a school.

For the arrivals to this island were almost never met by the city, which was indifferent, or by the state, which was suspicious. They were met by *their own* — by the cousin who had come five years before and knew which streets to avoid and which foreman was hiring, by the landsman who let them sleep on the floor until they found work, by the woman from the same village who appeared at the dock as if summoned and said, in the home language, the four words that are the foundation of every diaspora: *come, I know someone.* Wepwawet keeps these openers, the unsung infrastructure of arrival, the network of reaching hands that the official maps never showed because it was made of relation, not of roads. The shelves hold their tools: the address written on a scrap and passed hand to hand, the key lent to a stranger, the loan that was never quite repaid and was never meant to be, the bed made up on the floor for the next one and the next.

I built Wepwawet near the door of the hall, for obvious reasons, and I made its own door the widest of the twenty-four, wide enough for two abreast, because the opener of ways never comes through alone; they come through bringing someone. And here is the mechanism I am proudest of in the whole building, simpler than Vesper's turning stars or Maïsha's tuned overtones: the door of Wepwawet cannot be opened from inside by one person. It is weighted so. To leave the column you must either have someone outside pull as you push, or you must turn and hold it for the person behind you, so that the only way out of Wepwawet is *together* — the only way to leave the column of the path-opener is to open the path for another. The children discover this with shrieks of delight and outrage. They cannot get out alone! They must hold the door! And in the holding, laughing, exasperated, they learn in their bodies the law that the diaspora learned in its bones: you got here because someone held the door; you do not get to leave without holding it for the next.

A grave child asked me whether the openers of ways ever got tired. Always, I said. It is exhausting to be the one who knows the city for everyone who doesn't, the one whose phone rings at midnight in the old language, the one expected to find the lawyer, the job, the room, the loan, forever, because you came first. The openers of ways are tired unto death and they open the way anyway, and that is their particular sanctity, dimmer and more constant than the bright arrival of the rescued — the long grey holy patience of the one who holds the door for thirty years. I built them a column the colour of morning because no one else ever built them anything. When you grow up, I told the grave child, you will likely be an opener of ways for someone — a younger one, a newer one, a more lost one. It will tire you. Do it anyway. And come back here, and put your tired hand on Wepwawet, and know that the building knows what you did, and is, in part, standing because of it.

## XII. Solace

And now the column I promised the two-named child, the column nearest my own heart, the one whose story is, in the way these things are true, my own. Solace means comfort, the easing of grief — but it holds in this hall a particular comfort: the comfort of the *chosen name*, the name a person gives themselves when no inherited name will fit, the name that is not the grandmother's and not the clerk's but the soul's own, declared, against resistance, into being. Solace is the column of those who came to this island fleeing not a country but a *certainty* — the certainty, pronounced over them at birth by people who could not have known, about who they were and what they were allowed to be — and who found here, in the loud forgiving anonymity of the city, the room at last to set that certainty down and become, instead, themselves.

There has always been, on this island, a quarter where the rules of the elsewhere did not reach — a tangle of older streets, west and a little north of where we stand, where the grid loses its nerve and the ways run crooked, and where, for two hundred

years and more, the ones who could not be themselves at home came to be themselves at last. They came from the farm towns and the firm families and the places where everyone knew them as the thing they were not; they came across no ocean but a distance just as wide, the distance between the assigned self and the true one; and they found each other here, in the crooked streets, in the back rooms and the cafés and the chosen families, and they took new names, and they wore the clothes that were theirs, and they loved as they were made to love, and they called it, rightly, *coming out* — which is an arrival like any in this hall, a crossing of water to a place that, against all odds, made room. Solace keeps them. Solace keeps the chosen name.

I will tell you, since the catalogue is a confession and this is its truest page, that I am one of Solace's guests. I was given a name and a certainty at my birth, and I carried them a long way, and they did not fit, the way a beautiful coat made for someone else does not fit, binding at the shoulders, gaping at the heart. And I came — not across an ocean, but across the same wide water all of Solace's guests have crossed — to a place and a people who let me set the certainty down. I chose my own name. I became a third upright thing, neither the one nor the other, bearing weight in two directions and calling it balance. And the relief of it, the *solace*, was so total that I have spent my life since trying to build that relief into something other people could walk into — which is, in the end, what this whole yellow hall is: the solace I found, made structural, made load-bearing, made large enough for forty children at a time to stand inside and feel, perhaps without knowing why, that here they will be allowed to be whoever they turn out to be.

The shelves of Solace hold chosen names — only first names, only the chosen ones, written by the choosers themselves on small cards, a registry of self-declaration that any visitor may add to, so that the column fills, year on year, with the names people gave themselves when no given name would do. And the two-named child, when we reached this column, looked at the cards a long time, and then looked at me, and asked the question I had promised her the answer to: how did you know it was your real name? Because when I said it, I told her, I felt the coat fit. Because I stopped binding at the shoulders. Because the certainty I had carried so far finally got to be set down, here, in a city that did not care what I had been told to be, and a name I made myself rose up to take its place, and it was — there is the old word again, and it is exact — *bashert*. Meant. The truest names are not always the ones we are given. Sometimes the truest name is the one we arrive at, across whatever water, and choose, and say aloud, and finally, gladly, answer to. She nodded. Then she took a card, and she wrote on it not her school name and not her grandmother's name but a third name, one I had never heard, a name she had perhaps just that moment chosen, and she shelved it in Solace, and she did not tell me what it was, and she was right not to. Some sanctuaries you keep even from the Teller.

## *Interlude: On Being Called the Right Thing*

*After Solace the children were unusually quiet, the way they are after they have witnessed something true happen to one of their own, and a thoughtful boy walked beside me a while before he asked: "Is it hard to change your name? Do people get mad?"*

*Sometimes, I told him. Some people get mad when you choose your own name, because your choosing reminds them that they could have chosen too, and didn't, and that is an uncomfortable thing to be reminded of. Anger is often just grief for a freedom someone didn't know they had.*

*He chewed on this. "But it's just a* name*," he said. "Why do they care so much?"*

*Ah, I said. Here is a thing worth knowing. It is never* just *a name. A name is the smallest house a person lives in, the one they carry everywhere, the one they answer the door of every time someone calls. When you call someone by the right name — the name they chose, the name their grandmother used, the dear-name, the true one — you are saying:* I see the house you actually live in, and I have come to the right door. *And when you insist on calling them by the wrong one, you are saying:* I would rather you lived in the house I picked for you. *Now you see why people care so much. We are not arguing about names. We are arguing about whose house a person gets to live in. And the answer, in this hall, on this island, is always: their own.*

*The boy was satisfied, mostly. Then he grinned and said: "What if I want to be called Spaceship?" You may absolutely be called Spaceship, I told him, with total seriousness, for the law does not distinguish between a solemn chosen name and a glad one, and a child who wishes to be a spaceship is telling you something true about where they intend to go. He laughed so hard he had to sit down. But I noticed, the rest of the morning, that he answered to Spaceship when the others tried it, lighting up each time, sheltered, like all of Querida's and Solace's guests, under the roof of being called exactly what he wished to be.*

SUITE THE FOURTH

# Columns & Shelter

*In which we consider the columns that hold the roof most plainly — the guests who were, themselves, a shelter for others, so that a column might be defined as any upright thing that stood between someone vulnerable and the weather.*

## XIII. Ferdinand

There was a story the island's children loved, in a hard decade, about a bull who would not fight — who sat instead beneath a cork tree and smelled the flowers, gentle in a profession that demanded fury, and who, brought to the great arena to be made violent before a roaring crowd, simply sat down and smelled the flowers the ladies wore in their hair, until the baffled spectacle gave up and sent him home to his tree. Ferdinand the column is named for him, and holds the sanctuary of the gentle — the refuge that exists for those whose only crime is that they will not be made hard by a city that prizes hardness above almost everything.

For this island has always run on a certain ferocity — the elbow, the hustle, the deal, the unsleeping competition that the place is famous for and half proud of — and it has always, therefore, been perilous to be gentle here, to be the soft one, the dreamer, the child who would rather smell the flowers than win the fight. Ferdinand keeps the gentle ones who came anyway, and survived anyway, and found, in the cracks of the ferocious city, the cork trees they needed: the quiet branch library, the back pew, the all-night café where a soft soul could sit unbothered, the park bench under the actual tree, the chosen corner where the unaggressive could be unaggressive in peace. The city did not provide these sanctuaries on purpose; it provided them by accident, in its overlooked margins, and the gentle found them with the unerring instinct of the gentle, and made of them a hidden archipelago of cork trees across the hard rock. Ferdinand maps that archipelago.

The shelves of this column hold the implements of gentleness, which the ferocious city does not recognize as tools and therefore does not tax: a sketchbook, a packet of flower seeds, a worn paperback of poems, a harmonica, a pair of binoculars for watching the birds that the city, despite itself, cannot keep out. The guests of Ferdinand are the ones who refused the arena — the conscientious, the tender, the ones who would not be made to fight, who chose against all the city's urging to remain soft, and who turned out, in the longest run, to be a kind of strength the ferocious never understood: for it is the gentle who painted the city's pictures and wrote its songs and planted its window-boxes and remembered its birds, and a city is not, finally, remembered for the fights it won but for the flowers it let someone stop to smell. Ferdinand is the proof that gentleness is not the failure to be strong.

Gentleness is a strength the arena has no weapon against, because it simply, immovably, sits down.

A child who I could tell was one of Ferdinand's own — you learn to spot them, the soft-eyed ones who hang back — asked me, almost in a whisper, whether it was okay to not like fighting, because everyone at his school said he should toughen up. I took him to the wall of Ferdinand where the seeds are kept, and I pressed a packet of them into his hand, and I told him: there is a kind of toughness that is just being hard, and the city has plenty of it and does not need yours. And there is a kind of toughness that is staying soft in a hard place, which is far rarer and far braver, and is the only kind this hall respects. You do not have to toughen up. You have to *stay gentle on purpose*, which is the hardest thing, and you will be a cork tree for someone someday — some smaller, softer soul will find you and sit in your shade — and that is a more important thing to be than anyone who ever won a fight. Keep the seeds, I told him. Plant something. Smell the flowers. Let them call it weakness. We will call it Ferdinand, and we will hold up a roof with it.

## XIV. Nokomis

Nokomis is the grandmother. The name is from one of the languages of this land's first peoples, where it means just that — grandmother, the moon's own daughter in the old telling — and it holds the most universal sanctuary in the catalogue and the one the children know best, for nearly every child in the hall has been sheltered by a grandmother, and those who have not, ache for one, and Nokomis is built to be a grandmother to those, too. There is a shelter that is made of a particular old woman's particular love, and it is the first sanctuary most of us ever knew, and the city is, in its hidden anatomy, a vast lattice of grandmothers, holding up far more than anyone counts.

For consider who actually did the sheltering, in the tenements and the walk-ups and the crowded rooms where the arrivals raised their young. While the parents worked the brutal hours the new country demanded, it was the grandmothers who kept the children — the *abuela*, the *bubbe*, the *nonna*, the *teta*, the *halmoni*, the *lola* — the old women who had crossed the water last and most reluctantly and who could not learn the new language and were pitied, by the busy young, as baggage. But they were not baggage. They were the *foundation*. They kept the children alive and kept the old tongue alive and kept the recipes and the songs and the prayers alive, and they did it from a chair by the window, dispensing the one resource the ferocious city could not manufacture and could not tax: unconditional, unhurried, total love, the kind that asks nothing and notices everything, the kind a child can build an entire self on top of, safely, knowing the foundation will not move. Nokomis keeps the grandmothers. The slab leans on her nearly as hard as it leans on Maïsha, and for the same reason: she holds up the people who hold up everyone else.

Inside Nokomis I built a chair — the only furniture in any column besides Anevay's bare bench and the comma-pods — a deep soft chair by a perforation set low, at sitting height, so the light falls just where an old woman's hands would be, on the lap, where the mending was done and the child was held and the apple was peeled in one long spiralling unbroken ribbon that is, perhaps, the original of all the spiral stairs in all the columns. The children take turns in the chair. They are too small for it; their feet stick out. But they sit in it and something settles in them, some old inherited memory of having been held, and the ones who have a grandmother think of her, and the ones who do not are held, for a moment, by the column itself, which was built, in part, to be a grandmother to the ungrandmothered, an old soft love available to any child who climbs into the chair and lets the low light fall on their lap.

The grandmothers come at the end of every visit to collect the children, and so I always try to time the morning so that we reach Nokomis last, or nearly last, so that the actual grandmothers arrive while the children are still inside the grandmother column, and there is, every time, a moment I built the entire hall to produce: the real grandmothers, in their good coats, framed in the wide bright doorway, and the children turning from the soft chair to see them, and the recognition leaping the distance — *there she is, there is mine* — and the small bodies launching across the pale shining floor into the old waiting arms, and the love that has held up this city for four hundred years made briefly, blazingly visible, in a yellow column, at the foot of an island, at the end of a morning. I never tire of it. I built a school to see it. Nokomis is how the building says *thank you* to the ones who were called baggage and were, all along, the load-bearing heart of the whole arriving world.

## XV. Tindra

Tindra is a small word from the cold north and it means *to twinkle, to sparkle faintly* — the verb for what a star does, or a candle seen far off across snow, or the light left burning in a single high window when all the rest of the city has gone dark. Tindra the column holds the sanctuary of the small kept light: the lamp left on for the one who has not yet come home, the candle in the window that says *here, this way, you are expected*, the faint persistent shine that is too weak to light a room and strong enough to save a life, because the lost do not need a floodlight; they need one true small light that did not go out.

You will have seen, on the old map at the front of this catalogue, the small yellow mark out in the harbour, beyond the island's tip, with the words *a lamp held up*. The island has long kept a light there — a great one, on a green figure, that the whole world knows — but Tindra is not about the great light. Tindra is about the *small* ones, the uncounted domestic lamps that ordinary islanders kept burning for ordinary reasons: the mother who left the kitchen light on every night for forty years because her son had once come home late and frightened in the dark and she had

sworn he would never again find the window black; the landlady who kept a candle in the front room for any lodger out past the locking of the door; the whole quiet practice, in a hundred thousand windows, of leaving a light for someone — which is, when you think about it, the most concentrated possible act of hope, to spend your own oil through the night on the mere chance that someone is still coming and will need to find the way.

The shelves of Tindra hold lamps — oil lamps, candle stubs, a child's nightlight, a hurricane lantern, a single bare bulb on a frayed cord — the homely hardware of kept light, each one having burned, once, for someone expected. And the column itself is the brightest in the hall after dark, for I wired it so that when the School closes and the great glass goes black and the children are gone and the columns stand alone in the night, Tindra alone stays lit — a small persistent glow at the foot of the island, visible from the water, left on, the building's own candle in its own window, kept burning through the dark on the chance that someone is still coming. The watchman thinks it a waste of current. I have not corrected him. He is not wrong about the current and he is entirely wrong about the waste. There is no waste in a light left on for the not-yet-arrived. It is the cheapest sanctuary there is and the one that has guided the most souls home.

A child asked me, troubled, what happens if no one comes — if you leave the light on all night and the person never arrives. I had to think about that one, because it is the real question, the one the hopeful must answer or be merely sentimental. Sometimes no one comes, I told her. Sometimes you keep the light for someone who is lost for good, and the lamp burns down to nothing, and the window stays empty, and that is one of the true sorrows and I will not pretend it isn't. But here is why we keep the light anyway, even knowing. The light is not only for the one who is coming. The light is also a *promise*, made out loud, in oil and current, to the whole dark — a promise that says: *in this city, in this window, someone is expected, someone is wanted, the door will be answered.* And every lost soul who passes in the night and sees that one kept light, even if it is not for them, even if no one is coming for *them* — they see that it is the kind of place where a light gets left on, and that knowledge alone has turned more than one wanderer back from the water's edge. We keep the light, I told her, so that the dark will know what kind of island this is. Tindra never goes out. That is the point of Tindra.

## XVI. Eulogia

We close the suite of Shelter with Eulogia, whose name means *good words*, *blessing*, the speaking-well-of — the same root that gives us the eulogy, the good words said over the dead, but holding here a larger and more living sense: the sanctuary that is built entirely of how we speak of one another, the shelter of praise, the roof of the kind thing said. For there is a weather of words that blows through every life, and most of it is cold — the slight, the sneer, the indifference, the long erosion of being

spoken of carelessly — and against that weather the only shelter is the good word, deliberately spoken, the blessing said aloud while the blessed can still hear it.

The guests of Eulogia are the islanders who practiced, against the grain of a sharp-tongued city, the discipline of the good word: who praised in public and corrected in private, who spoke of the absent kindly, who said the loving thing at the moment it would do the most good rather than saving it, as the cold are taught to, for the funeral. For this is the tragedy Eulogia is built to prevent — the tragedy of the unsaid blessing, the love hoarded all through a life and then poured out, too late, over a coffin, in good words the dead can no longer hear. The guests of this column refused that economy. They said the good words early. They told the living that they were loved and admired and needed, while the living could still be sheltered by the telling. And they understood that to bless someone aloud is to build them a room they can go and stand in on the days the cold words come — for a true compliment, deeply meant, becomes a permanent shelter in the memory of the one who received it, a place to wait out the weather of every later slight.

Inside Eulogia there is a strange and lovely device. The column is the most resonant in the hall after Maïsha, but where Maïsha returns your voice multiplied, Eulogia returns it *delayed* — there is a faint architecture of echo, tuned so that a kind word spoken inside the column comes back, a few seconds later, in your own voice, as if the building itself had decided to repeat your blessing back to you. The children discover this and immediately, gleefully, fill the column with compliments, shouting *you're my best friend* and *you have nice shoes* and *I like how you laugh* and hearing it all come back, doubled in time, the blessing and its echo, the good word and the good word kept. I watch them learn, without a single lesson, that a kind thing said does not vanish — that it goes out into the architecture of the world and comes back, that you live, ever after, in a building made partly of the good words you have spoken, and that you had therefore better speak a great many.

An older child, near the edge of no longer being a child, asked me quietly whether it was too late to say good words to someone who had already died. The hardest question of the morning, and the truest, and I gave it the truest answer I have. It is never too late to *say* them, I told her; it is only too late for them to be *heard* by the one they are about. But listen, because this is what Eulogia knows that the funeral does not: the good words you say about the dead are heard by the *living* — by everyone else in the room, who learns, from your blessing, both who the dead one was and what kind of person *you* are, the kind who speaks well, who shelters with words, who builds rooms of praise. The eulogy is not wasted on the dead. It is a sanctuary built, in the dead one's name, for everyone still alive to hear it. So say the good words, I told her, early and late and even at the very end and even after. They are never wasted. They are the cheapest building material there is and the only one that holds up a roof made of grief. She nodded, and went into the column, and said something I could not hear, and waited, and heard it come back to her in her own

voice, and came out with her face washed clean, sheltered, the way all of Eulogia's guests are sheltered, under a roof of good words kept.

## *Interlude: The Grandmothers Are Sighted*

*It was at the end of Shelter that the first grandmother appeared at the far glass — early, as the best ones always are — and a sharp-eyed child cried out, "They're coming!" and a ripple of the particular joy-and-disappointment of every ending went through the group: glad the grandmothers were here, sorry the morning was nearly done.*

*"Do we have to stop?" asked a child who had not wanted to come and now did not want to leave, which is the usual trajectory and the one I count on.*

*Not quite yet, I said. There are eight columns we have not reached — a whole half of the sky. We will not finish them today. You will have to come back.*

*"Will the columns be the same when we come back?" a small one asked, with the metaphysical seriousness children bring to questions adults find merely logistical.*

*The same and not the same, I told her. The columns will be standing in the same places, holding up the same roof, keeping the same stories. But you will be different — a little taller, a little more arrived — and so the columns will tell you slightly different things, because a story is a conversation between what is kept and who is listening, and you will be a new listener every time. That is why people return to a true sanctuary all their lives and never finish it. It is not that the building keeps changing. It is that* you *keep arriving.*

*She thought about being a new listener every time. "So I never run out of columns," she said, working it out, "because I never run out of being new." Exactly so, I said, delighted, for she had said it better than I could. You will never run out of columns, because you will never run out of being new, and the day you stop being able to arrive at them differently is the day — but I did not finish, because the grandmothers were at the door now in their good coats, and the half-told suites of the Tide and the Future would keep, standing in their places, holding up their corners of the sky, patient as only the load-bearing can be, until the new listeners we would by then have become came back across the water to be told.*

SUITE THE FIFTH

# Columns & the Tide

*In which we consider the columns that hold the water — for the island breathes with the tide, and every sanctuary set beside the sea must reckon with the truth that the same water which carried the guest in could, on the turn, carry them out, and that to be kept is to be kept against the pull of the tide.*

## XVII. Refugio

Refugio is the plainest-named column in the hall, for its name means only *refuge*, *shelter*, the bare thing itself, and I named it plainly on purpose, because the guests of this column are the most recently arrived, the ones still wet from the crossing, and they have no patience for poetry and no need of it. They need the plain thing the word names. They came fleeing the newest fires — the wars of this very year, the gangs and the droughts and the rising water and the old eternal certainty of someone powerful that someone powerless must not be allowed to exist — and they crossed by every means the desperate have ever used, and they arrived, and they asked, in whatever words they had, for *refugio*. Refuge. The plain thing. And the column holds the island's plain answer, which has not always been yes, and which this hall exists to insist should always, always be yes.

For here the catalogue must be honest, as the children demand, and admit that the island's record is not clean. There were years the door was shut — shut against the very kinds of people whose grandchildren now run shrieking across this floor, shut with quotas and with cruelty and with the cold administrative language that is how the powerful say *no* without having to watch the face that hears it. Ships were turned back. Families were divided. The plain word *refugio* was answered, often, with the plainer word *no*, and people died of that *no* who should be alive, and Refugio keeps their memory too, because a sanctuary that only celebrates its successes is a liar, and the children would circle the lie in red. But Refugio keeps, alongside the shameful *no*, the stubborn record of every *yes* — every time an islander, an official, a congregation, a stranger, looked at the wet and terrified arrival and overrode the cold word with the warm one, and made room, and saved a life, plainly, at some cost, because it was the right thing and they were close enough to the water to remember that they too, or their grandmother, had once arrived wet and terrified and been let in.

The shelves of Refugio are nearly empty, and this is the most affecting thing in the hall to those who understand it, for the most recent arrivals carried the least — a phone, a document folded to softness, a child's single shoe, a bottle of water nearly gone. I keep these plain poor objects under no glass and with no ornament, because they are still warm, because the people who carried them are alive and in the city

now, becoming its newest citizens, and Refugio is less a memorial than a *waiting room* — the one column whose story is not yet over, whose cargo is still being carried up the streets, whose guests are, at this moment, somewhere in the five boroughs, learning the trains, finding the work, being met by the openers of ways. Refugio is the column of the present tense. It is the proof that the whole long history kept in the other twenty-three is not history at all but a thing still happening, today, at the water's edge, to someone who is asking the plain question and waiting, wet and hopeful, for the island to remember what it is.

A child asked me, with the directness that shames all evasion, whether the people in Refugio were allowed to stay. Some are, I told her, and some are still waiting to find out, and some — I will not lie to you — will be told no, and sent back toward the fire, and that is happening while we stand here in the light, and it is the great wrong of our particular hour, and you are going to grow up into the fixing of it. She asked what she could do. The plain thing, I told her, since this is the column of plain things. When you are grown and someone powerful says the cold word *no* to the wet and hopeful, you will be in a position to say the warm word *yes* — with your vote, with your voice, with your spare room, with your hand held out at the water's edge. The island is not a fixed thing that is either a sanctuary or is not. It is a decision, made again every single day, by people exactly like you will be. Refugio is here to make sure that when your turn comes to decide, you remember which answer this hall was built to give. *Yes. There is room. Come. The light is very good.*

## XVIII. Ashreï

From the prayers of one of the oldest of the island's sheltered peoples comes the first word of this column: *Ashreï — happy, blessed, fortunate are they* — the word that opens the song of praise sung in the house of refuge, *happy are those who dwell in your house.* Ashreï the column holds the blessedness of *dwelling* — not the drama of arrival, which the other columns keep, but the quieter, deeper joy that comes after, when the fleeing is done and the staying begins, when a person wakes one ordinary morning and realizes, with a start of pure fortune, that they are no longer running, that they *live* here now, that this is *home*, and that to simply dwell in safety is, after the long crossing, the most extravagant happiness the world affords.

For we make, in our songs and our stories, a great deal of the moment of rescue — the door opening, the ship landing, the threshold crossed — and rightly, for those moments are holy. But Ashreï keeps the holiness of *after*: the ten thousand unremarkable mornings of a life lived in safety, the school run and the shop and the prayer and the supper, the blessed tedium of the no-longer-hunted. The guests of this column are everyone who lived long enough on this island to grow *bored* here — and I mean that as the highest praise, for boredom is the luxury of the safe, the privilege of those whose survival is no longer in daily question, and a refugee who lives to be bored has been kept so well and so long that danger has become

unimaginable, which is the very definition of sanctuary achieved. *Happy are those who dwell in your house*. Happy, even, are those who find your house a little dull, for their grandparents would have wept with joy at the chance to be so safely, so durably, so blessedly bored.

Inside Ashreï I built nothing dramatic — no turning stars, no tuned overtones, no echo, no kept flame. I built, instead, an ordinary room: a table, two chairs, a window with the low light coming in, a place that looks like a thousand kitchens, the most domestic interior in the whole soaring hall. And it is, the visitors agree, the most moving column of the twenty-four, precisely because it is the least architectural — because after all the soaring and the glowing and the climbing, you open one more yellow column expecting another wonder and you find, instead, a kitchen table in the afternoon light, the place where a kept people finally got to simply *live*, and the ordinariness lands like a blessing, which is exactly what it is. Ashreï teaches that the goal of all the drama is the calm — that we open the doors and hold the lights and brave the tide not so that there can be more rescue but so that there can be more *kitchens*, more ordinary safe afternoons, more people blessedly bored at a table in the low gold light, happy, dwelling, home.

A restless child, made impatient by the plainness of the room, asked me where the cool part was, the trick, the wonder. There is no trick in this one, I told him. This is the column of getting to stay. He frowned; staying did not seem to him an achievement. Sit at the table, I said. He sat. Now imagine, I told him, that you have run for a thousand miles, that you have been afraid every single day of your life, that you have lost your home and your country and the graves of your grandparents, and that you have crossed a wide cold water not knowing if the far shore would let you land. And now imagine that it did. And that you are sitting, at last, at a table that is yours, in a country that will not make you leave, in the low afternoon light, with nothing happening, nothing at all, no danger, no flight, just an ordinary safe boring afternoon stretching out in front of you like the rest of your guaranteed life. I watched him imagine it. I watched the plainness of the room turn, in his face, into the wonder he had been looking for. *Oh*, he said, very quietly. Yes, I said. *Oh*. That is Ashreï. Happy are those who get to be bored in safety. May you be so lucky, and may you remember, when you are, exactly how lucky it is.

## XIX. Sōlas

Sōlas is a word from the island of the west, the green island across the colder ocean, and it carries a doubled meaning that I could not resist: it means *light*, and it means *comfort*, *solace*, *joy* — the same word for the brightness and for the consolation, as if that people, who knew more than their share of darkness, had decided in their language that light and comfort were not two things but one. Sōlas the column holds the guests who came across the tide from a great hunger — a famine so total that it emptied villages and filled coffin-ships, and drove a desperate, despised, half-starved

multitude across the water to this island, where they were met, at first, with contempt, with signs in the windows that said their kind need not apply, with every cruelty the already-arrived reserve for the newly-arriving, as if cruelty too were a thing one inherited and felt obliged to pass on.

And they survived it. That is the whole of Sōlas, and it is enough. They survived the famine and the ships and the contempt, and they did not become bitter, or not only bitter; they became, in time, the city's firefighters and its police and its priests and its poets and its politicians and its singers in the corner pubs, and they took the doubled word with them, *sōlas*, light-and-comfort, and they kept lights and gave comfort, and the despised hungry multitude became, within a few generations, one of the great sheltering peoples of the island, holding the door for the next wave of the despised exactly as — this is the bitter, beautiful pattern of the whole hall — they had not, at first, had it held for them. Sōlas is the proof that the chain of cruelty can be broken, that a people met with contempt can choose, against every excuse, to meet the next arrivals with *sōlas* instead, with light and comfort, and that this choice, made by the formerly-despised, is the most powerful force for sanctuary the island has ever known — more powerful than any law, because it is made by the only people who truly remember what the closed door feels like from the wrong side.

Inside Sōlas the perforations are cut in the shape of small flames, and the light comes through them flame-shaped and dances slightly — another mechanism I will not explain — so that to stand within is to stand among a thousand gentle fires that do not burn, light without heat, comfort without consumption, the doubled meaning made visible. The children love to catch the flame-shapes on their palms. And on the shelves are the homely relics of survival-without-bitterness: a fiddle that played at wakes and weddings both, a union card, a fireman's helmet, a book of the old songs in the old tongue that the famine nearly killed and the exiles kept alive across the water, so that the language of the green island survived, in the end, partly here, on this far rock, sung in the corner pubs by the grandchildren of the starved. Sōlas keeps the songs that the hunger could not kill, and the light that the contempt could not put out, and the comfort that the comfortless chose, against all reason, to become.

A child whose own family, she told me proudly, had come from the green island long ago, asked whether the bad signs in the windows were still there. No, I told her; those signs are gone, and your people took them down, partly, by becoming so woven into the island that no one could imagine it without them. But — and here I told her the hard part, because she was old enough — there are new signs now, in new windows, against new arrivals, saying in new words the same old thing: *your kind need not apply*. The signs never quite go away; they only change whose name they curse. And so the question Sōlas asks your family, and every family that survived the closed door and made good, is the sharpest question in the hall: *now that you are inside, now that the signs are no longer against you — what will you do about the signs that are against someone else?* Will you forget, comfortably, that you were ever

the despised arrival? Or will you remember, and take the new signs down, and offer the new hungry the *sōlas* that was, at first, denied to your own? She set her jaw, in the way of her people, and said she would take the signs down. I believed her. They usually do, in the end. It is, perhaps, the green island's deepest gift to this one: the long memory of the closed door, and the stubborn refusal to close it again.

## XX. Marigold

We end the suite of the Tide with its most luminous guest, the column called Marigold, named for the bright gold flower that the peoples of the south — the great warm lands below the river that is also a wound — strew in glowing paths upon a certain night each year, to guide their beloved dead home across the threshold between the worlds. For these arrivals brought to the island a wisdom about the last and widest tide of all, the tide between the living and the dead, and a way of meeting it that is the opposite of grey: not with black crepe and hushed despair, but with marigolds, with sugar skulls, with the favourite foods of the departed laid out in welcome, with music and laughter and the bright insistence that the dead are not gone but merely across the water, and may be guided back, one night a year, along a path of gold flowers, to the table where they are still, gladly, expected.

Marigold holds the most radical proposition in a hall full of them: that even death is an arrival, even the dead are guests, even the last tide can be met with light instead of grey. The guests of this column refused, against the whole solemn machinery of mourning, to surrender their dead to mere absence. They kept them present — set their photographs on the home altar, cooked their favourite dishes, spoke to them, laughed with them, scolded them, missed them out loud and in colour — and in doing so they performed, for the whole grey-grieving city to see, a different way of being bereaved: not less loving, but less defeated; not forgetting the loss, but refusing to let the loss have the last bright word. The marigold path says to the dead what this whole hall says to the living: *there is room; come; you are expected; the light is very good.* It is the same sanctuary, extended past the final threshold. It is the island's welcome, made large enough to include even the gone.

Inside Marigold the light is the warmest in the hall, a deep gold I tinted toward orange, the colour of the cempasúchil, the flower of the dead; and the floor of this one column is not the pale poured stone but a mosaic, laid by hands from the southern lands, in the shape of a path of marigolds winding up toward the stair, so that you enter the column treading a path of gold flowers, exactly as the dead are said to tread them home. And on the shelves are not relics of survival but relics of *love-continued*: a photograph with a candle before it, a plate set for someone absent, a letter written to a grandmother years after her death and never sent because it did not need to be, the writing of it being the whole point. The children, who fear death less than adults imagine and more than adults admit, grow thoughtful and then, strangely, glad in Marigold, for it tells them the thing they most need and are least

often told: that to lose someone is not to lose them entirely, that love builds a path the lost can walk back along, that the dead can be guests, and that grief, like every other hard weather in this hall, can be met not in grey but in gold.

A child who had recently lost someone — I could tell, the way you can tell, by the careful way she held the question — asked me whether the dead really came back along the marigold path. I gave her the answer Marigold gives, which is neither yes nor no but truer than both. Something comes back, I told her, along the marigold path. Whether it is them, or only our love for them grown bright enough to seem like them, I cannot tell you, and the people who laid this floor would say the question misses the point. What I can tell you is this: on the night you lay the path and set the table and speak their name and cook the food they loved, they are *present* — present in the room, present in your mouth speaking their name, present in the smell of the food, present in the gold light, present in you, who carry them, and who are, this night, lighting them a way home. Is that the same as their coming back? I leaned close, because this is the column's deepest secret. It is close enough, I told her. It is close enough that the people who walk the marigold path each year are comforted, and laugh, and miss their dead in colour, and are not defeated. And being not-defeated by death is the largest sanctuary there is, and you have just been given the key to it, which is a flower, and which is gold, and which is bright on purpose, like everything in this hall, like the whole brave yellow building, holding up its corner of a sky that the dead, too, are welcome under.

## *Interlude: On the Turning of the Tide*

*The grandmothers were gathering now in real numbers beyond the glass, and the light had shifted to the flat bright noon that means a morning is spending its last coin, and a child who had been counting on her fingers announced: "That's twenty. There's four more. You said twenty-four."*

*There are, I said. Four more. The columns of the Future. But the Future is a strange suite to tell, because unlike all the others it is not yet finished — it is being built right now, by you, while I talk.*

*"How can we be building it," she objected, "if we're just standing here listening?"*

*Because listening is how the future gets built, I told her. Every story you have heard this morning is now inside you, and you will carry it out the door the way the guests carried their cargo across the water, and you will set it down, somewhere, in some life I will never see, and it will become part of what you do — the door you hold, the light you leave on, the good word you say, the sign you take down, the name you let someone choose. The Future columns are not about people who already arrived. They are about* you*, and they are hollow, and they are waiting, and the only way to fill them is to grow up and do the things the first twenty columns taught you. That is why I save them for last and never quite finish them. They cannot be finished in here. They can only be finished out there, by you, later, when it counts.*

*She considered the weight of this — that she herself was the unfinished part of the building, that the architect had, on purpose, left a quarter of the sky for her to hold. It is a large thing to tell a child. But they can hold large things; that is what no one believes and what this whole hall is built to prove. "Okay," she said at last, squaring her small shoulders under the invisible slab. "Tell me the four. I'll build them later." And so I did, quickly, because the grandmothers were at the door, the four columns of the Future, into the hands of a child who had just agreed to become load-bearing.*

SUITE THE SIXTH

# Columns & the Future

*In which we consider the columns that are not yet full — the guests who have not entirely arrived, because they are the children, and the keeping that has not entirely happened, because it is still to come — these being the columns the reader is, gently and without escape, asked to help hold up.*

## XXI. Quietude

The first column of the Future is the one the hurried city least expects and most needs: Quietude, the column of rest, of stillness, of the unhurried hour — the future in which the descendants of the desperate are finally allowed to be *calm*. For consider the engine that drove every arrival in this hall: hurry. The hurry of flight, the hurry of the closing door, the hurry of the new country's pitiless clock, the hurry passed down through generations like an inherited pulse — work, run, strive, do not stop, never stop, for the ones who stopped were the ones who did not make it. The island runs on inherited hurry. And Quietude holds the radical proposition that the truest victory of all that flight would be, at last, the right to be still — that the proper destination of a people who have run for centuries is not more running but a garden, an afternoon, a held breath, a stop.

I built Quietude as a place to do nothing, which is the hardest thing to build in this city and the most subversive. There is no cargo on its shelves — they are bare, like Anevay's, but where Anevay's emptiness honours the ground that came before, Quietude's emptiness offers the rest that is to come. There is only the comma-pod, and the soft low light, and a single instruction painted on the inner wall, the only instruction in the hall: *you may stop here*. The children, who are taught everywhere else to hurry, to achieve, to become, are told in this one column that they may stop, that they need not become anything, that stillness is not laziness but the deepest fruit of all the striving, the thing the striving was secretly *for*. And they stop. You can watch the inherited hurry drain out of their small bodies, the clenched readiness of the descendants of the fleeing softening, for a moment, into the ease their ancestors crossed an ocean hoping their grandchildren might one day feel. Quietude is the column where the running finally gets to be over.

For this is the future I most want for the children, and the one I am least sure the city will allow them: a future with rest in it. Not the collapse of exhaustion, which the hurried city permits, but true quietude, chosen stillness, the garden in the afternoon — the thing every arrival was ultimately fleeing toward even when they could not name it, for no one crosses a cold ocean dreaming of more hurry on the far side; they cross dreaming, however secretly, of a porch, an evening, a long calm life for someone they love. Quietude keeps that secret dream and offers it forward. It says to

the children: your great-grandmother ran so that you could one day sit still; do not betray her by running when you do not have to; the highest honour you can pay the desperate dead is to live, on their behalf, the calm life they were denied; to rest is not to waste their sacrifice but to *spend* it, exactly as they intended.

A child, fittingly, fell asleep in Quietude — actually asleep, in the pod, in the soft light, while I was still talking — and the other children began to giggle, and I hushed them, because nothing in the whole morning had pleased me more. Let her sleep, I whispered. She is doing the most advanced exercise in the building. She is resting, in a sanctuary, without fear, in the middle of the day, descended from people who could not afford to close both eyes at once — and her sleep, here, now, is the entire point of everything. It is the future the columns are for. We stood around her, forty children and one Teller, and we watched a small descendant of the hunted and the hurried and the fled sleep peacefully in a pool of gold light, and we did not wake her, and it was, I think, the holiest thing we did all morning, holier than any telling: we kept watch, in quietude, over someone's hard-won rest.

## XXII. Beacon

If Tindra, back in the suite of Shelter, was the small light kept burning in the window for the one still coming, Beacon is its future and its grown form: the column of the one who becomes, themselves, a great light for others — who takes all they were given in this hall and turns it outward, blazing, deliberate, a fire kept high on a hill so that the lost across the whole dark water might steer by it. For the final lesson of every sanctuary is that it is not a destination but a *relay*: you are sheltered so that you may shelter, lit so that you may light, kept so that you may keep. Beacon is the column where the guest becomes the host, where the rescued becomes the rescuer, where the long chain of mercy that built this island takes its next link from the children now standing in the light.

The guests of Beacon are all those who completed the turn — who, having been sheltered, built shelters; having been taught, taught; having been lit through their own dark crossing by some small kept flame, grew up to become the flame for the next. They are the formerly-hungry who founded the soup kitchens, the formerly-homeless who built the houses, the formerly-voiceless who became the advocates, the children of this very hall who grew up and came back to teach in it. Beacon is the column of the completed circuit, and it is the brightest in the hall by day, for I set its perforations widest and its glass clearest, so that it blazes with caught sun, a true beacon, visible — the harbour pilots have told me — from far out on the water, a high gold fire at the foot of the island that says, to everyone still crossing toward it: *steer here; this is the place that keeps; this is the light that was lit by someone who was once as lost as you.*

On the shelves of Beacon are the tools of the turned — the founder's charter, the teacher's chalk, the organizer's bullhorn, the nurse's lamp, the long unglamorous

instruments of people who decided to spend their lives being light for others. And there is a mirror, the only one in the hall besides the polished floor: a small bright mirror set at a child's height, angled to catch the perforated sun and throw it, so that a child standing before it finds their own face suddenly haloed in caught gold light, finds themselves, for a startled moment, *being* the beacon — the light passing through them and out into the hall — and understands, before I say a word, that the fire is meant to be taken up, that they are not only to be warmed by the light but to *become* it. It is the most important mirror a child will ever stand in front of, for every other mirror shows them only themselves, and this one shows them themselves *on fire for others*, which is the only image of a person worth growing up into.

The child who had agreed to become load-bearing stood in the mirror of Beacon a long time, watching the gold light pass through her face. What do I do, she asked me, to be a beacon? Not someday — now. You are nearly there already, I told her, for you have done the first thing, which is to let the light in; you have listened all morning, taken the stories in, agreed to carry them. The second thing is simpler than you fear: when you meet someone in the dark — someone lost, someone newly arrived, someone being told they are not allowed to exist — you turn toward them the light you were given here, and you say, in whatever words you have, the words this whole hall is built to say. She knew them now. She had heard them at every column. She said them back to me, in the mirror, with the gold light pouring through her small fierce face: *There is room. Come. You are expected. The light is very good.* Yes, I said, and my voice was not entirely steady. That is how you are a beacon. You have just done it. You did it to the dark in the mirror, and the dark in the mirror was the future, and you lit it.

## XXIII. Liesel

The penultimate column has a particular name, a child's name, Liesel, and a particular story, for it is the column of one child who came to this hall and did not leave — or rather, who left and returned, and returned, and finally stayed, and became its keeper, and is the reason the catalogue you are reading exists. I will tell you about Liesel, because the Future is not an abstraction; it arrives wearing a specific face, with a specific name, on a specific morning, and walks across the specific floor, and changes everything, quietly, by growing up.

Liesel came to the School as a small child, in the white and the pink, on a morning like this one, brought by a grandmother who had herself crossed a cold water fleeing a grey certainty. And Liesel was a listener of the rare deep kind — the kind who does not chase her reflection across the floor but stands very still at each column, taking it in, letting it change her — and she came back, year on year, a new listener every time, exactly as the columns intend, until she was too old for the white and the pink, and then she came back as a young person and asked to help, and then she came back as a grown one and asked to teach, and now Liesel keeps the lamp of Tindra lit at night

and tells the morning children the stories of the columns and is teaching me, slowly, in my older years, how to let go of a thing I built so that it can outlast me. Liesel is the future that comes back. She is the proof that a sanctuary works: that a child sheltered here grew up to do the sheltering, that the building made a keeper of one of its kept, that the light got passed.

I built her column, while she was still young and did not know it was hers, as the most *welcoming* of all — its door always open, never even latched with a story, the one column you may enter without knowing the secret, because Liesel's gift, the gift of the future that returns, is that she lowers the threshold for everyone behind her. On its shelves are the things a child loves and keeps: a first book read alone, a friendship bracelet, a drawing of the columns made in a child's hand and saved for thirty years, a school photograph, the small treasures of a childhood spent safe enough to *have* treasures. For this is what Liesel's column finally honours — not the dramatic arrival, not the brave survival, but the quiet miracle of a childhood lived in safety, a child who got to simply grow up, kept, in the light, until she was old enough to keep others. The greatest thing a sanctuary can produce is not a survivor. It is a child who never had to be one, who grew up so safely that she had attention to spare for the safety of others. Liesel is that child. Every one of you could be.

Liesel was at the door now, in fact — she had come to help bring the children to their grandmothers — and the child who had agreed to be load-bearing saw her, and saw the way Liesel and I looked at each other, the keeper and the keeper-to-be, and understood, I think, the whole shape of it: that the woman at the door had once stood exactly where she stood, a small listener in pink and white, and had grown into the holder of the light, and that this was not a story about the past at all but a set of instructions for her own life, should she choose to follow them. "Was she really me?" the child asked — meaning, was Liesel once a child like her — but the question came out in the present tense, *was she really me*, and I did not correct the grammar, because the grammar was true. Yes, I told her. She was really you. And you are really her. That is what this column is for. It is the one place in the hall where the future and the past are the same person, standing in the doorway, holding the light, having grown up safe enough to give it away.

## XXIV. Threshold

And so to the last column, which is not, in the end, a column at all. Threshold is hollow all the way through — not merely hollow within, like its twenty-three siblings, but open at both ends, top and bottom, front and back, a column that has so completely become an opening that it is less a support than a *door that learned to bear weight*. You can see straight through it to the harbour beyond. The wind moves through it. It holds up its corner of the slab while refusing, utterly, to enclose anything — and this paradox, that the thing which encloses nothing still holds up the

sky, is the final teaching of the hall, the secret the whole catalogue has been walking toward, sunwise, all morning long.

For what is a sanctuary, finally? Not a fortress — a fortress encloses, and keeps out, and a sanctuary that only keeps out has become the very thing its guests once fled. No: a true sanctuary is a *threshold*, a place defined not by its walls but by its openings, a structure whose entire purpose is to be *crossed* — crossed inward by the arriving, crossed outward by the arrived-and-strengthened, crossed and crossed again by the endless tide of the coming and the going, holding up its shelter not in order to trap anyone inside but in order to make the crossing safe. Threshold is the column that understands this completely. It encloses no one. It keeps no cargo, for it is open at both ends and the wind would only carry it off. It keeps, instead, the *passage itself* — the holy fact of the doorway, the moment of crossing, the instant when someone who was outside steps through and becomes someone who is welcome. That instant is the whole island. Threshold holds it up.

Through Threshold, if you stand at the right place at the right hour, you can see clear out across the harbour to the open water beyond, to the grey line where the next ships are always, even now, coming — and the children love to stand inside the open column and look out at the sea and the sky framed by the yellow, and feel the harbour wind move through, and understand, without my saying it, that the building is not finished, that the tide has not stopped, that someone is always, at this very moment, out there on the water, crossing toward the island, asking the plain question, hoping for the warm answer. Threshold is the column that faces the future and holds the door open to it. It is hollow all the way through because the future must be allowed to pass; it is yellow because the welcome must be visible from the water; it is a door that bears weight because that, in the end, is the definition of every good thing in this hall and on this island and perhaps in any human heart worth living in — a door that bears weight, an opening that holds up a sky, a way that is kept open at some cost, for the next one coming, whoever they turn out to be.

I always end at Threshold, with the children gathered in the open column, the harbour wind in their hair, the sea framed in gold before them, and I always say the same last thing, and I will say it to you now, who have walked the whole catalogue with me and are, therefore, about to cross back out through the threshold of this book into your own life. The hall is not the sanctuary, I tell them. The hall is only a place that *teaches* the sanctuary. The real sanctuary is the one you will build, out there, with your life — out of the doors you hold and the lights you leave on and the good words you say and the names you let people choose and the room you make, gladly, conspicuously, in the brave colour, for whoever comes to you across whatever water asking the plain question. You are the columns now. You are what holds up the sky. Go and be hollow all the way through — open at both ends, keeping nothing, holding everything — a threshold, a door that bears weight, a way kept open for the next. And then they run out through the open column, laughing, into the arms of

their grandmothers, across the bright floor that gives the light back, and the morning is over, and the sky, I notice every time, is still up there, held.

## *Closing Frame: The Grandmothers Come*

*And then the grandmothers came, as they always come, in their good coats, framed in the wide bright doorway of the hall, and the morning broke apart the way a held note finally breaks — not into silence but into a fuller, looser music, forty children released at once across the shining floor toward forty waiting pairs of arms.*

*I stood by Threshold and watched it, as I have watched it for thirty-one Septembers and will watch it, the keepers willing, for a few more. The load-bearing child found her grandmother and was lifted, though she is nearly too big to lift, and over the old woman's shoulder she looked back at me, and at the columns, and I saw her doing the arithmetic of the whole morning, fitting it somewhere inside her where it would keep. She had agreed to be load-bearing. I believe she will keep the agreement. They mostly do. That is the secret the grey world does not credit: that children, told the truth and trusted with weight, will bear it — will grow up into openers of ways and keepers of lights and sayers of good words and takers-down of cruel signs, will become, the best of them, beacons and thresholds, doors that bear weight, the next generation of the island's long stubborn yes.*

*Liesel began the gentle work of gathering coats and matching children to grandmothers, and the hall emptied, slowly, the way the tide goes out, leaving the columns standing alone again in their pool of doubled light. I walked the spiral one last time, sunwise, the way I always do after they have gone, touching each column as I passed — Anevay first, who takes the morning; Maïsha, who sings; Pomander, who is fed by her visitors; Tacit, who keeps the wordless welcome; and on, and on, through Memory and the Name and Shelter and the Tide, to the four unfinished columns of the Future, which are never finished, which are never meant to be, which are filled only out there, later, by the children, when it counts.*

*At Threshold I stopped, as I always stop, and looked out through the hollow column at the harbour, where the light was on the water and a far ship was, as there is always a far ship, coming. I do not know who is on it. I never know. But I know what the island is for, and what the hall is for, and what I have spent my one strange life building, neither the one thing nor the other, a third upright thing bearing weight in two directions and calling it balance. I know that when that ship lands, and its passengers come up the streets asking the plain question, there will be, on this island, because of these columns and these children and this brave yellow refusal to be grey about mercy, at least a few souls ready to give the warm answer. That is all a sanctuary is. That is all it has ever been. A few souls, ready with the warm answer, standing in a good light, holding the door.*

*The watchman will come soon to lock the glass, and I will leave Tindra burning, as I always leave Tindra burning, the building's own small light in its own dark*

*window, kept on through the night on the chance that someone is still coming and will need to find the way. And the columns will stand through the dark, holding up the sky, keeping the stories, patient as only the load-bearing can be, until the morning comes off the harbour and strikes Anevay first, and the whole bright hall glows up again from a floor that gives the light back, ready — gladly, conspicuously, in the brave colour, twenty-four ways at once — to hold up the sky for one more day, and to make, for whoever comes, room.*

*— S.*
*at Threshold, the morning over, the light still on the water*

THE CATALOGUE OF COLUMN-ROOMS

# A Note on the Columns Not Catalogued

Twenty-four is not the number of kinds of person this island has kept. Twenty-four is the number of columns the engineers would let me build before the slab no longer needed any more help to stand. I want to be clear about this, here at the end, lest the reader close the catalogue believing that the sanctuary has been fully inventoried, that the guest list of the sky is complete, that we have named everyone. We have named almost no one. For every column I built there are a hundred I did not, a thousand kinds of arrival I left in the bright unbuilt air between the pillars, and the gap between the twenty-four I raised and the multitude I could not is not a failure of the catalogue. It is the catalogue's deepest and most deliberate truth.

Consider only the columns I wanted and could not fit. There was to have been a column for the ones who came fleeing not a country but a marriage, a household, a fist behind a closed door — the domestic refugees, whose border is a threshold in their own home, and who found on this island the first rooms in their lives that locked from the inside. There was to have been a column for the ones who arrived already old, too late to learn the new tongue or the new ways, who spent their last years homesick in a language no one around them spoke, and were sheltered anyway, fed anyway, kept anyway, by children and grandchildren who could no longer quite talk to them but would not, for anything, send them back. There was to have been a column for the animals — yes, the animals — for the island has been a sanctuary to more than the human, to the hawk that nests on the cornice and the feral cat that the whole block secretly feeds and the old dog walked by a man who has, the neighbours whisper, no one else at all. I could not build them. The slab did not need them. But they stand, uncatalogued, in the bright air, and you may build them yourself, in your own hall, with your own life, for the catalogue of mercy is open at both ends, like the column called Threshold, and the wind of the unbuilt moves through it always.

And consider the floor. You will have noticed, in the plates, the wide pale shining acreage between the columns, where the children run and their reflections run beneath them — the empty floor, which the painter calls the most important feature of the whole hall and which the catalogue has, until now, declined to explain. Here is the explanation. The empty floor is the standing-room of the uncatalogued. It is where the unbuilt columns would have gone, and where, in a sense truer than architecture, they do go — for the floor is not empty at all; it is *reserved*; it is the column-shaped space the building keeps open, deliberately, for everyone the catalogue has failed to name and the sanctuary has not yet kept. When a new kind of arrival comes to the island — and they always come, the kinds no one foresaw, fleeing the newest fire — there is, in this hall, already a place for them: not a built column, which would have presumed to know them in advance, but an open floor, which

makes no such presumption and offers, instead, the only honest welcome, which is *room*. Bare, ready, swept, and waiting. The most generous thing a sanctuary can keep is unbuilt space.

So when you have read the twenty-four and feel, perhaps, that you have toured the whole of the island's mercy, go back and look once more at the empty floor, and understand that you are looking at the largest exhibit in the building — the exhibit of everyone not yet arrived, every story not yet told, every column not yet built, every kind of person the island will be asked, in years neither I nor the catalogue can see, to make room for. And understand, finally, the gentlest and least escapable implication of that pale waiting acreage: that you, too, are somewhere on it. You, reading this, have a column-shaped space reserved, hollow and ready, the light very good, for whatever it is you have carried across whatever water and have not yet found a place to set down. The catalogue did not name you. The floor has kept you a place anyway. Come and stand on it. There is room. There was always room. That is the only thing this whole yellow building has ever been trying, twenty-four ways at once and a thousand ways besides, to say.

BACK MATTER

# Afterword

*by Surjan*

I am often asked whether the Sanctuary School is real. It is a question I have come to love, because the only honest answer is *yes, and that is the least interesting thing about it*. Yes, there is a hall at the foot of the island; yes, the columns are yellow; yes, the children come in their white and their pink and the grandmothers come in their good coats at the end of the morning. You may visit. The watchman will let you in if you know which story unlatches the door, and now, having read this far, you do. But the realness of the building is not the point, any more than the realness of the harbour is the point of the word *to harbour*. The building is real the way a sentence is real — as a made thing, pointing past itself, at something truer than itself.

What it points at is an argument, and I will make the argument plainly here, at the end, where the catalogue can no longer hide behind its columns. The argument is this: that mercy is structural. That a city, or a nation, or a heart, does not *have* a sanctuary as it has a park or a museum — a pleasant amenity, optional, defensible only in good times. A city *is* its sanctuary, or it is nothing that will last. The room you make for the stranger is not a charity you perform when you can afford it; it is the load-bearing member of the whole construction, the column without which the roof comes down on your own head as surely as on theirs. I have built a yellow building to say a grey-sounding thing: that kindness is not soft. Kindness is *engineering*. Remove it and measure how long the structure stands.

I came to this conviction the long way, through my own life, which I have not hidden in these pages because to hide it would be to build a sanctuary with a locked room in it, and a sanctuary with a locked room is a contradiction I will not draw. I was given a name and a certainty and I could not live in them, and I crossed the wide water of becoming-myself, and I was nearly not let land — there were years the door was very nearly shut against me, by people who loved me and by a world that did not — and then I was let land, by a few souls ready with the warm answer, in a city loose enough and forgiving enough and gloriously indifferent enough to let me become a third upright thing. And the relief of it did not make me want to pull the ladder up behind me. It made me want to build a wider ladder, a yellow one, visible from the water, with twenty-four rungs, each one a story of someone else who was also, against the odds, let land.

For that is the choice every kept person faces, and it is the secret subject of this whole book. When you have been sheltered, you may do one of two things. You may decide that you were *exceptional* — that you deserved the room that was made for you, that you earned the warm answer, and that those who come after must earn it

too, must prove themselves as you imagine you proved yourself, must be worthy. This is the path of the closed door, and it is taken, heartbreakingly, by so many of the formerly-sheltered, who pull up the ladder and call it justice. Or you may decide the other thing: that you were *lucky* — that the room made for you was a grace and not a wage, that you were no worthier than the next wet and hopeful arrival, and that the only fitting response to undeserved shelter is to spend your life making undeserved shelter for others. This is the path of the open door, of Wepwawet and Beacon and Threshold, and it is the path this book exists to recommend, with every yellow column it has.

I want to say something, too, about joy, because I have made joy the center of a book about flight and famine and the closed door, and some will think that frivolous, and they will be wrong, and I want to explain why with my whole heart. The grey-minded believe that to honour suffering you must be solemn, that joy in the presence of remembered pain is a kind of disrespect. But I have sat with the survivors — of the famines, the wars, the closed doors, the certainties — and I will tell you what they almost universally want, what they beg the living to do on their behalf: they want us to be *happy*. They did not suffer so that we would suffer in sympathy. They suffered so that we would not have to, and the only thing that redeems their suffering, the only thing that makes it mean anything at all, is for us to take the safety they bought us and be *glad* in it — conspicuously, gratefully, in the brave colour. To be grey about their sacrifice is to waste it. To be yellow about it is to spend it as they intended. Joy is not the opposite of honouring the dead. Joy is the honouring. The marigold path is the truest funeral.

And so I built a school that teaches children to be glad on purpose — not glad in ignorance of the dark, for they hear the dark middles of every story and circle the lies in red, but glad in full knowledge of the dark and *in defiance of it*, which is the only joy worth the name. I wanted them to know that they live on a kept promise, and that the keeping is now partly theirs, and that the proper way to carry a kept promise is not grimly, as a burden, but gladly, as a gift you cannot wait to pass on. If I have done my work, then some of the forty children who came this morning will grow up to be openers of ways and keepers of lights, and they will do it not out of grim duty but out of the radical joy this hall poured into them off a floor that gives the light back — the joy of being, themselves, load-bearing; the joy of holding up a corner of someone else's sky.

The catalogue is, in the end, a love letter to an island — to this particular narrow rock that has been, against its own worst instincts and despite its long record of closed doors, one of the great sanctuaries of the human story; a place built, layer on layer, out of everyone it failed to turn away; a place whose deepest nature, beneath the commerce and the grid and the ferocity, is the simple structural fact that people have always come here fleeing something and carrying something, and that enough of them were let land to make a city out of welcome. I love it the way you love a

flawed and generous parent. I have not hidden its failures; Refugio and Sōlas and Maïsha keep them, sharp and unsanded. But I have built a building to its best self, and filled that building with its children, and I have told them the truest thing I know, which I will now tell you, and then let you go back out through the threshold into your own life, where the real columns wait to be built.

Here it is. You were kept. Maybe not across an ocean, maybe not from a famine, but somehow, by someone, at some narrow moment, a door that could have been shut against you was held open instead, and you came through, and you are here, reading this, alive, in a good light. You were kept. And the keeping was a grace, not a wage. And the only fitting response — the response that turns your luck into meaning and your safety into a sanctuary — is to spend the rest of your one strange life being, for others, the held door you came through. Be hollow all the way through. Keep nothing; hold everything. Leave the light on. Say the good words. Let people choose their names. Take down the cruel signs. Make room, gladly, conspicuously, in the brave colour, for whoever comes to you across whatever water. Hold up your corner of the sky. It is lighter than it looks, and you are stronger, and the floor — I promise you this, I have built my whole life on it — the floor gives the light back.

People ask me, too, what will happen to the hall when I am gone, and they ask it gently, the way you ask an old person anything, and I tell them the truth, which is that I do not much care — and then I correct myself, because that is not quite right, and Surjan has resolved to stop saying not-quite-right things in the years that are left. What I mean is this: I do not care whether *this building* lasts, the actual concrete and glass and clever yellow, because the building was never the point; the building is a sentence, and sentences are not meant to be preserved but to be *understood* and then surpassed by the living they instructed. If the hall falls and the columns are carted off and the site becomes, as everything on this island eventually becomes, something that pays better rent, I will not grieve — provided the children who walked it grew up to build, out there, with their lives, the realer and unbuildable thing it was always only pointing at. Liesel will keep the lamp as long as there is a lamp to keep. After that, the keeping passes to hands I will never shake, of children not yet born, who will not know my name and will not need to, because they will have the only inheritance that matters, which is not a building but an instruction, four words long, that I have hidden in every column and will leave you with now: *make room; be glad.*

*— Surjan*
*the hall, the lamp left burning*

BACK MATTER

# Catalogue of Architectural Plates & Map

What follows is the descriptive catalogue of the plates belonging to the portfolio *The Atlas of Upright Things*, being a survey of the load-bearing stories of Mannahatta. Of these, the first four are drawings — the Map (Plate I), the Cabinet Oblique (Plate II), the Elevation and Section (Plate III), and the Typology (Plate IV) — and the remaining thirteen are photographs of the hall itself, made on ordinary mornings while the children were at their telling. All seventeen are reproduced in the pages that follow, each with such few words as the cataloguer could bear to add; for a photograph of a sanctuary, like the sanctuary itself, does most of its work in light rather than in language, and the wise cataloguer says little and lets the reader look.

**PLATE I. Mannahatta: the Island as a Field of Standing Stories.**
Survey drawing; charcoal and gold on warm ground. The island is shown in its entirety, tapering from the broad northern hills to the southern point where the Sanctuary School is sited, marked by a cluster of yellow column-dots within a thin building outline. The two rivers are named, the harbour below, and a dashed arrival-arrow rises from a small gold mark in the bay annotated *a lamp held up*. Reproduced as the frontispiece of this volume; discussed at length in the Cartographic Note following this catalogue.

**PLATE II. The Hypostyle Hall: Cabinet Oblique from the South-West.**
Paraline projection; the frontal plane shown true, the depth axis receding at forty-five degrees and foreshortened by half, after the cabinet convention. Two ranks of the belled yellow columns are seen carrying the white roof-slab above the poured floor, with the glazed curtain-wall at the right and three figures introduced for scale. The drawing is the clearest single record of how the columns stand in company — how the hall is not a row of monuments but a society of supports, leaning on one another's help to hold one sky.

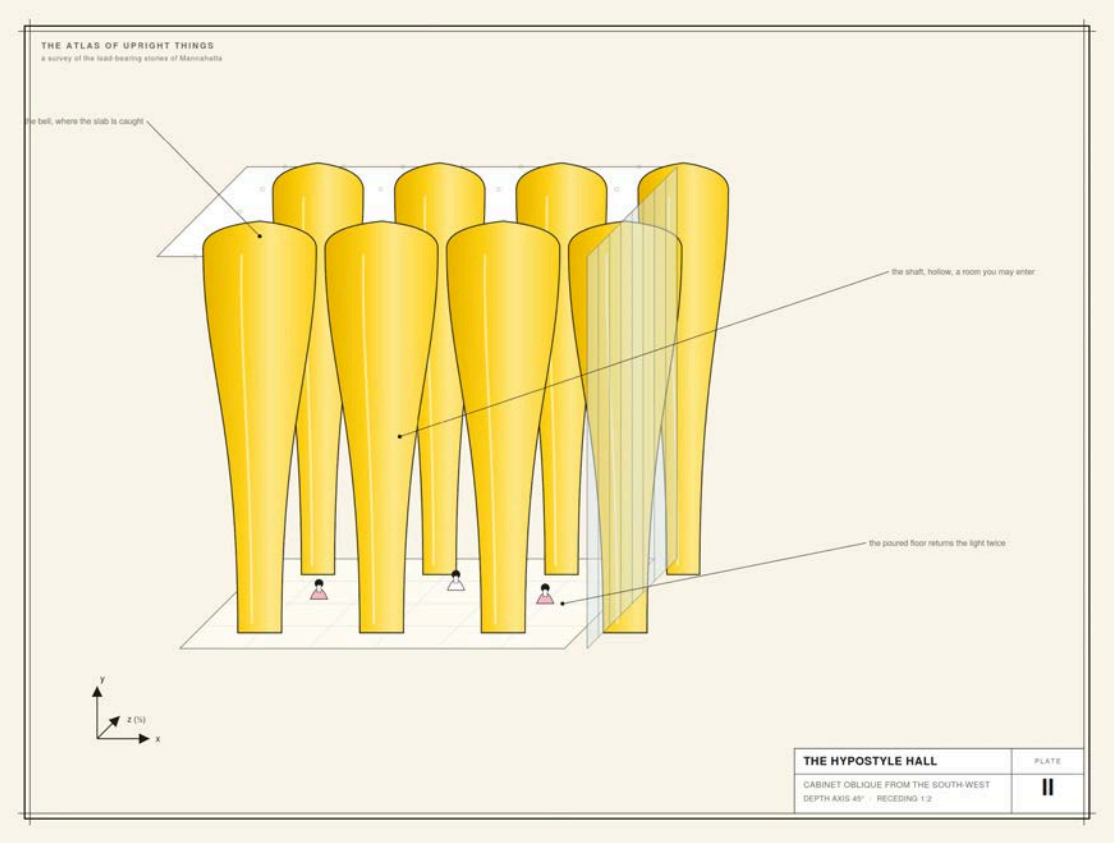
THE ATLAS OF UPRIGHT THINGS
a survey of the load-bearing stones of Mannahatta
the bell, where the slab is caught
the shaft, hollow, a room you may enter
the poured floor returns the light twice
y
z (%)
x
THE HYPOSTYLE HALL
PLATE
CABINET OBLIQUE FROM THE SOUTH-WEST
DEPTH AXIS 45° · RECEDING 1:2
II

*PLATE II. The Hypostyle Hall — cabinet oblique from the south-west; depth axis 45°, receding 1:2.*

**PLATE III. Elevation & Section: the Columns along the South Walk.**
Two drawings on one sheet. Above, the longitudinal elevation: six columns of differing profile and aperture — the oval mouth, the arched pink door, the perforated and the twin — ranged beneath the roof-slab, with figures for scale and the height carried off in a dimension line annotated, in the painter's hand, *22 hands, give or take a song*. Below, the section *through* a single column: the hollowed interior shown in pink poché, the spiral stair the colour of the column climbing past shelves of cargo to the perforated bell, a reader's pod at the base, and the daylight admitted, as the section-note says, *as stars*.

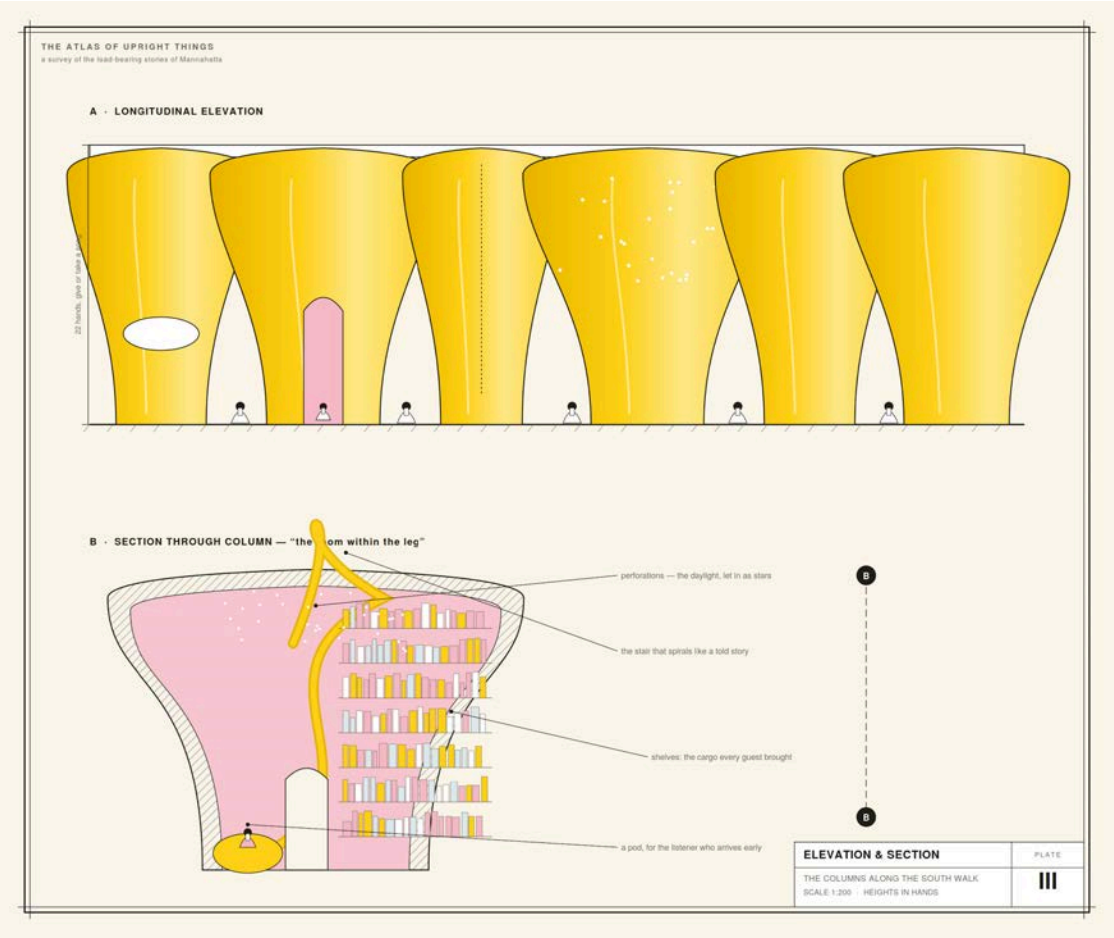
THE ATLAS OF UPRIGHT THINGS
A · LONGITUDINAL ELEVATION
B · SECTION THROUGH COLUMN — "the room within the leg"
perforations — the daylight, let in as stars
the stair that spirals like a told story
shelves: the cargo every guest brought
a pod, for the listener who arrives early
B
B
ELEVATION & SECTION
PLATE
THE COLUMNS ALONG THE SOUTH WALK
III

*PLATE III. Elevation & section — the columns along the south walk; the room within the leg.*

**PLATE IV. Dramatis Columnae: a Typology of the Twenty-Four.**
Comparative plate; twenty-four column-profiles ranged in a grid of six by four, each numbered and named, from Anevay at the upper left to Threshold at the lower right. No two profiles are alike, the painter having insisted that a column is a character before it is a support, and that the eye should be able to tell Saudade from Halcyon at a glance, as it tells one face from another. Reproduced in the front matter under the heading Dramatis Columnae, to which the reader is referred.

**PLATE V. The Hall at the Hour of First Light.**
The long hall seen down its library wall at the hour the morning clears the harbour: a great trumpet-column flares into the slab, the shelved cargo of a hundred elsewheres runs off to the left, and the children cross the doubled light in their pink and white, doubled again in the floor that gives the light back.

*PLATE V.  The hall at the hour of first light.*

**PLATE VI.  Children Crossing the Floor.**
A girl in a pink the colour of an apology accepted crosses the open floor toward the column's great mouth, within which the stair can be seen turning like a told story; behind her the other children scatter across the shine, the real and their shy second selves.

*PLATE VI. Children crossing the floor.*

**PLATE VII. The Bell, Where the Slab Is Caught.**
One column flares so wide at the head that it ceases to be a support and becomes a sky; the children gather beneath it on the floor that returns the light, small under the great glad weight it so easily bears.

*PLATE VII. The bell, where the slab is caught.*

**PLATE VIII. The Oval Mouth.**
A long aperture opened in the side of a column-room, through which the guests within are seen at their tables; above the opening the perforations begin — the first stars of the deliberate galaxy that the noon will complete.

*PLATE VIII. The oval mouth.*

**PLATE IX. The Arched Door of a Column.**
A child framed in the arched door, half in the gold interior and half in the white hall, caught precisely on the threshold; above her the wall lifts away into its galaxy of perforations, and within wait the shelves of cargo.

*PLATE IX. The arched door of a column.*

**PLATE X. Entering the Column.**
Two small guests step through the arched door at the foot of the bell, passing from the bright public floor into the private weather within — the act the whole building exists to make safe, performed here in pink, without ceremony, as children perform the largest things.

*PLATE X. Entering the column.*

**PLATE XI. The Library Within (Mnemo).**
Two columns stand apart to let a tall wall of shelved books rise between them — the smuggled libraries of a hundred elsewheres — with the soft pods drawn up close and the children come to take down whatever they like, asked nothing at all.

*PLATE XI. The library within (Mnemo).*

**PLATE XII. The Reading Nook.**
A column flares overhead into the slab and shelters beneath its bell a pink-lit room of shelves and comma-pods, where the guests fold themselves in with a book and the perforated light falls across the open page.

*PLATE XII. The reading nook.*

**PLATE XIII. The Hollow Shaft, a Room You May Enter.**
The bell of one column curls open to show the pink interior glowing within, lit from above as stars — the library kept inside the leg — while beside it a second shaft rises straight and sure to the slab.

*PLATE XIII. The hollow shaft, a room you may enter.*

**PLATE XIV. The Open Column (Threshold), the Door That Bears Weight.**
A column so given over to its aperture that it has become an arch, holding up its corner of the slab while enclosing no one; its head is pricked with the galaxy, its pink interior open to all who pass, and the listeners wait in their pods just within.

*PLATE XIV. The open column — the door that bears weight.*

**PLATE XV. The Spiral.**
A column whose head turns open like a question that has decided to answer itself, opening upon a pink interior where the guests are gathered; the stair, the bell, and the welcome made one continuous curving gesture.

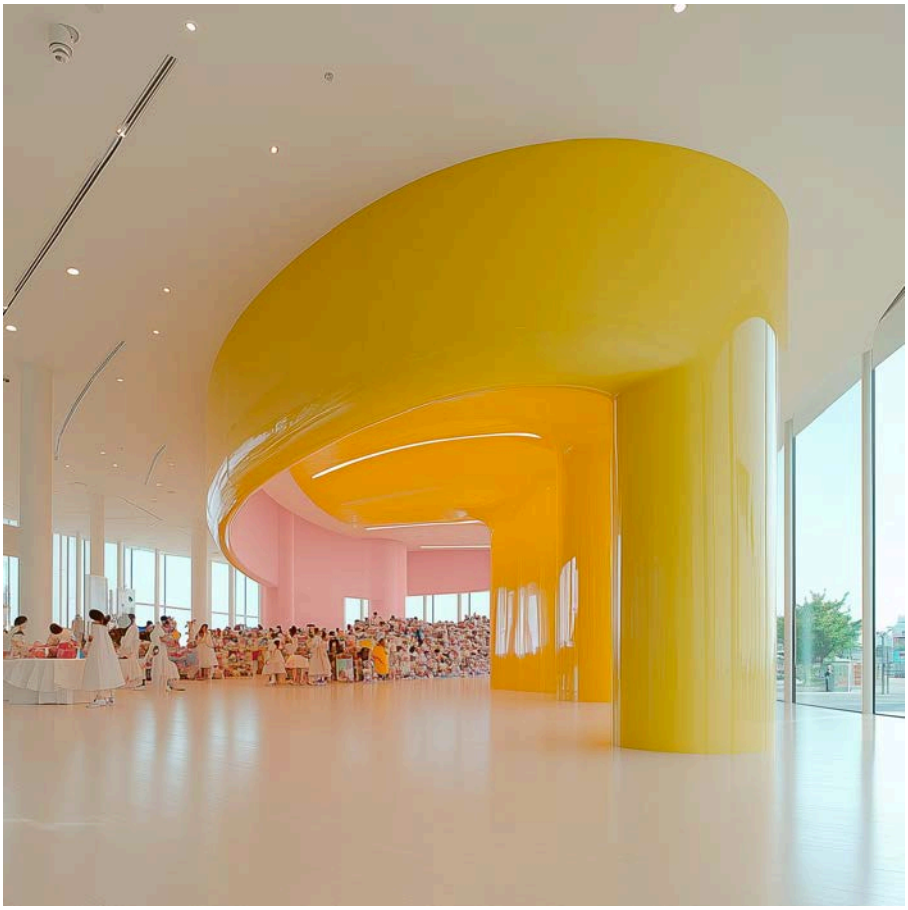

*PLATE XV.  The spiral.*

**PLATE XVI.  The Galaxy Beneath the Bell.**
Seen from below, the great flared head glows pink with its own perforations, a small deliberate firmament held overhead, while at the foot the soft domes wait like eggs of light for the listeners who arrive early.

*PLATE XVI. The galaxy beneath the bell.*

**PLATE XVII. The Hypostyle Hall in Company.**
The columns seen together, leaning their help into one canopy, the teardrop pods clustered at their feet — not a row of monuments but a society of supports, no one of which could hold the sky alone, and none of which is asked to.

*PLATE XVII.  The hypostyle hall in company.*

BACK MATTER

# A Cartographic Note

*on Plate I, the Map of Mannahatta*

A map is an argument about what matters, disguised as a record of what is. Every map leaves out almost everything; the cartographer's whole art is in the choosing, and the choosing is never innocent. The ordinary maps of this island choose the streets, the blocks, the parcels — they are arguments that the island is a grid of property, and they have been, for three centuries, the most persuasive arguments in the world, for the grid is real and the property is real and the maps are, in their way, true. But they are true the way a skeleton is true: accurate, and not the living thing.

The map reproduced as the frontispiece of this volume — Plate I, *Mannahatta: the Island as a Field of Standing Stories* — argues for a different island. It keeps the rivers, because the rivers are how everyone came, and it keeps the harbour, because the harbour is the threshold the whole island is built around, and it keeps the faint ghost of the grid, because the grid is real and to omit it would be its own kind of lie. But it argues, by what it emphasizes and what it lets fall pale, that the island's deepest truth is not its property but its *porousness* — that this is, before it is anything else, a place reached across water by people fleeing and carrying, and that the proper center of its map is therefore not the financial district nor the midtown spires but the point of arrival, the southern tip, where the streets give up their grid and run out into the harbour, and where, on this map, the Sanctuary School is sited in a cluster of yellow.

Note the small gold mark out in the bay, annotated *a lamp held up*, and the dashed arrow rising from it toward the island's tip. This is the line of arrival — the path along which the lamp's light falls, the sightline between the harbour's welcome and the island's door. The cartographer has made it the strongest line on the map, stronger than any street, because it is the oldest true route on the island and the one the ordinary maps never show: not a road but a *trajectory*, the curved bright path of coming-toward, traced by every soul who ever crossed the water hoping the far shore would let them land. The School sits exactly where that path comes ashore. This is not coincidence. The painter chose the site so that the building would stand on the very threshold the map exists to honour — the line between the water and the welcome, the place where *arriving* becomes *arrived*.

Observe, finally, what the map declines to do. It does not fill the rivers with the names of those who drowned crossing, though they were many, and a more honest map might. It does not mark the years the door was shut, the quotas, the turned-back ships, though Refugio keeps them and the catalogue does not hide them. The map is, the cartographer admits, an argument for the island's best self, drawn in its best

light, and to that extent it is aspirational — a picture not only of the island that is but of the island that could be, if it remembered, every day, the bright curved path of arrival traced across its harbour and chose, every day, to keep the lamp held up. A map, after all, is also a kind of promise. This one promises an island that keeps its door. The reader is invited to help hold the cartographer to it.

BACK MATTER

# Provenance & Acknowledgements

The compiler of this catalogue is indebted, as every cataloguer is, to sources both real and necessary, and observes the old courtesy of naming them, while noting that in a work of this kind the line between the consulted and the invented is, like the line between the water and the welcome, deliberately kept porous.

For the structural conceit — the city told as a catalogue of rooms, framed by the dialogue of a traveller and a listener — the compiler acknowledges the master of the invisible cities, whose book was read until its spine surrendered, and whose method, the description of fifty-five places as a confession of the fifty-five thousand left undescribed, is the silent armature of everything here. For the apparatus of the false catalogue, the invented plate, the scholarly footnote attached to a thing that may or may not exist, the compiler acknowledges the blind librarian of the southern hemisphere, who taught that a sufficiently careful description is a kind of creation, and that the catalogue of an imaginary collection is as real as any other catalogue, all collections being, in the end, arguments about what matters disguised as records of what is.

The histories braided into the columns — the island of many hills and its first peoples; the village that was taken to make a lawn; the handful of the nearly-refused who were told *let them stay, they have nowhere else*; the famines and the tenements and the crooked streets where the certainties did not reach; the marigold paths and the kept lights and the long memory of the closed door — are matters of record, and the compiler has tried to honour them in a mythic register without claiming for any invented scene the authority of documented fact, and without putting words in the mouths of the actual dead, who have said enough true things of their own and require no ventriloquism from the living. Where a person appears in these pages they are a figure, not a portrait; the columns keep peoples and seasons and silences, not the private names of the real, whose stories belong to themselves and to their descendants.

The Keeper of the Accession Ledger, B. Ferromonte, is thanked for a foreword written against his own better judgement, and for thirty-one years of measuring, with instruments, a gladness he affects not to believe in. Liesel is thanked for keeping the lamp, and for teaching an aging builder how to let go of a thing so that it may outlast him. The grandmothers are thanked, in their good coats, for the love that has held up this city for four hundred years and appears on no inventory. And the children are thanked above all — the building inspectors, the circlers of lies in red, the load-bearing small ones who agreed, this morning and every morning, to take a corner of the weight and stand under it, glad, in the brave colour, while the sky, against all the odds and because of all the keeping, stayed up.

*— S.*

## TWENTY-FOUR WAYS OF HOLDING UP THE SKY

*was set in Georgia, a face chosen for its warmth and its patience, two qualities a sanctuary requires of its type as of its people.*

*The architectural plates were drawn for the portfolio *The Atlas of Upright Things*, in charcoal and gold upon a warm ground, after the conventions of the survey, the cabinet oblique, the elevation, and the comparative typology.*

*The yellow is the yellow of the inside of an egg held up to a window; of a school bus; of the middle of a daisy; of the light at the exact moment the sun clears the harbour. It is, the children say, the colour of being glad on purpose. The publisher has been unable to improve upon this definition and has ceased to try.*

*Published by The Hypostyle Press, at the foot of the island, where the streets give up their grid and run out into water.*

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*The lamp is left burning. Someone may still be coming. The light is very good.*